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GURU TEGH BAHADUR

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G. B.

A BIOGRAPHY

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Balwant Singh Anand

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This is a fascinating and absorbing biography of Guru Tegh Bahadur portraying the ancestral and historical influences that shaped his life and character. History is presented through the pen portraits of most of the Mughal rulers of India and religion through the teachings of the Sikh Gurus.

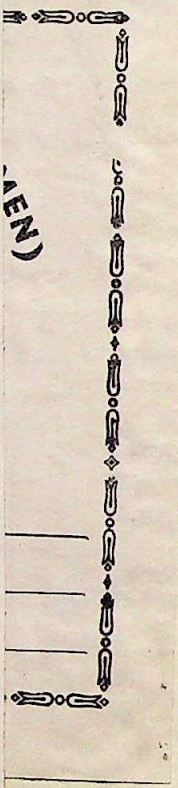
Mr Anand presents an intimate study of the spiritual awakening of the Guru and delineates a vivid and colourful account of the unusual drama enacted before the installation of Guru Tegh Bahadur as the apostolic head of the Sikh faith. The study further deals with the way the Guru steeled his followers for facing the fury and fanaticism of Aurangzeb. The portrayal of Guru's travels all over India and the men and women he met and the new centres of faith he established are described graphically. The martyrdom of the Guru is presented in a poignant and emotionally charged language. The book ends with a critical analysis and assessment of the sacred writings of the Guru.

Refreshingly original...He draws attention to the parallel development of the secular heritage of the Mughal dynasty and the spiritual succession of the Sikh Gurus...a challenging thesis.

—Khushwant Singh

An illuminating biography.....His command of language and style is moving.

—Dr Gopal Singh



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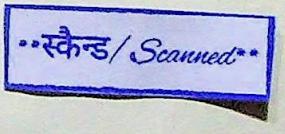

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By the same author

Cruel Interlude (Asia Publishing House)
Guru Nanak : *Philosophy and Ethics* (Punjabi University Patiala)
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To
Basant
with all my love

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1

Historical Perspective

It is indeed surprising that in a country with a long and living tradition of astrology and an almost universal belief in the influence of stars on the life of human beings and with plenty of horoscopists in every town and village, the date of birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur should remain a matter of controversy. Most of the scholars, biographers and historians have given different dates and sometimes the dates differ not by a day or two but by weeks. What is still more intriguing is the fact that the same is the case with regard to the dates of birth of most Gurus. It is most likely that horoscopes were prepared in most cases but, in the course of time, they were lost and no one paid any attention to the prognosis of village pandits. Secondly, with the total rejection of mythology and strong antipathy, almost amounting to detestation of superstitions by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith, astrologers, charlatans and mountebanks, including the pandits, were increasingly out of favour with the followers of Sikhism. At the same time, it appears that historical research and the maintenance of historical records were not a favourable pastime of Indian scholars. Some kings and princes in ancient India may have patronised official biographers or historians but during the middle ages, with the country parcelled out into small principalities and with endless rivalry and conflict besides widespread illiteracy, the pandits, literary men and the general public leaned heavily on mythological stories, versified legends and folk tales. It was the Muslim rulers of India who almost invariably employed official historians at their courts and encouraged the recording of contemporary events. Later, the English and western scholars after years of historical research, dug up the history of India

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and presented a fairly detailed account of the ancient and medieval times. But so far as Sikh history is concerned, it remained a closed chapter till very recent times. But all the same, by the time Guru Hargobind, father of Guru Tegh Bahadur, ascended the *gur-gaddi*, he had scholars of the stature of Bhai Gurdas at his court and it is, therefore, somewhat disconcerting that no one took the trouble to record the exact dates and time of the birth of his children. Be that as it may, the date of birth of Tegh Bahadur, which has come to be traditionally accepted is the 1st April, 1621 A.D. He was born in Amritsar in a house known as *guru ke mahal*. He had four brothers, Gurditta, Suraj Mal, Anil Rai, Atal Rai and one sister, Viro. Guru Tegh Bahadur was the youngest member of the family. His mother's name was Nanaki. It may, however, be mentioned that Guru Hargobind had three wives; Gurditta, Viro and Anil Rai were born from his wife Damodri, Suraj Mal from Mahadevi and Atal Rai and Tegh Bahadur from Nanaki. In terms of the medieval times, it was not a large family, in fact it was a small, compact and well-knit family and there was a great deal of love and affection among the brothers and their sister. Gurditta, being the eldest and the likely heir to the apostolic headship after his father, was the favourite of the father and was loved and respected by all the members of the family. Viro, being the only sister, enjoyed many privileges and many favours were bestowed upon her. As time passed Atal and Tegh Bahadur became greatly attached to each other, primarily because their age-difference was only one year and also because they were children of the same mother, Nanaki. Being the youngest, Tegh Bahadur was the darling of the family and during his infancy, was fondled and caressed by everyone.

It is strange, if not amusing to recall that in some of the Mughal reports about the family, Tegh Bahadur is mentioned as Tyag Mal. Some of his biographers have also claimed that his real name was Tyag Mal and it was only after the battle of Kartarpur that Guru Hargobind, after watching the way his son conducted himself in the battle, addressed him as Tegh Bahadur. But this is incorrect. When the grain is sifted from the chaff and the available recorded evidence is examined, it is easily established that when the news of his birth was conveyed to Guru Hargobind and he came to see him along with some of his leading followers, something in the child's face so stirred him that he

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PREFACE

The tercentenary anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was celebrated all over India with great enthusiasm in the year 1975. Besides the usual religious function and ceremonies, it generated a lot of intellectual interest and a number of seminars were arranged and a few books came to be written. I, too, felt the urge to write a biography of Guru Tegh Bahadur. But I was somewhat slow in making up my mind and, also, it took considerable time to collect the background material for the writing of such a book. It took me a year and a half to write the book. It has been a sheer labour of love; I got fascinated with the personality of the Guru and thoroughly enjoyed writing about the various facets of his life. I was also attracted by the personalities who dominated the Mughal times. I have, therefore, endeavoured to sketch pen portraits, on the one side, of Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjun Dand Guru Hargobind and, on the other hand, of Babar, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. I have introduced the story of the two dynasties, the Ecclesiastical dynasty of Guru Nanak and the Imperial dynasty of Babar because they impinged on each other and very much influenced the political events of the day. This historical and religious, background, I believe, will help the reader not only to appreciate the political policies of the time but also gain a deeper understanding of the basic principles of the Sikh faith. Effort has also been made to portray the various aspects of Guru Tegh Bahadur's personality such as the Hermit, the Pontiff, the Missionary and the Martyr. In the last chapter, the writings of the Guru have been critically examined and assessed. It is hoped that the reader will not be too severely critical because I am neither a historian nor a religious preacher but only a humble admirer of the Guru.

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I am greatful to my nephew Rupinder Singh Anand for reading the manuscript and making many valuable suggestions.

41, Pashchimi Marg,
Vasant Vihar, New Delhi.

Balwant Singh Anand

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CONTENTS

Preface *vii*

1
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE 1

2
THE TALE OF TWO DYNASTIES 27

3
THE MARCH OF EVENTS 54

4
THE HERMIT 81

5
THE GURU 115

6
THE MISSIONARY 140

7
THE MARTYR 178

8
THE POET 208

Index 231

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prophesied that this son of his would be a great hero and will fight with the flaming sword of spirit to protect truth and righteousness and, there and then, he named the child as Tegh Bahadur. He not only made his prophecy but also prayed to the Lord to "bestow upon his son the unflinching courage to fight the forces of evil to the end of his life." The small gathering of relations and followers who were present at the time, were struck with a reverential wonder and awe at the strange prophesy made by Guru Hargobind and the prayer he offered for the child. But the name given to the child was in tune with the wishes of the father because Tegh Bahadur means the brave hero of the two-edged sword. Mother Nanaki, who lay beside the child, closed her eyes and murmured her own prayer and beseeched the Almighty God to make her son strong in body and spirit to face the vicissitudes of life and uphold the traditions of his father and grandfather.

But the question still remains as to how he came to be called Tyag Mal. As he grew up and went to school and played with his friends, a very pronounced characteristic of his personality came to be noticed by his teachers and some elder members of the family. Even though he enjoyed playing games, he often sat apart, absorbed in his own thoughts. He had a serious bent of mind and preferred solitude to crowded places. He was a man of few words and did not normally indulge in gossip or random talk. He exhibited a pronounced tendency to keep his thoughts to himself. He had little attachment to various types of presents given to him on different occasions. Unlike most children, he did not hoard things but gave them away to his playmates. Half in a jest and half seriously, someone gave him the epithet of "Tyagi", which means one who rejects, disowns or renounces worldly possession and has no attachment for them. As often happens, the nickname stuck to him and became popular and many people came to address him by that name. But there was a lot of truth in the observation made because the two most prominent features of his character were renunciation and detachment. As his life story unfolds itself, it will be seen that he was both a fearless fighter and a non-attached Yogi or Tyagi.

The birth of a son is always an occasion for rejoicing. It was but natural that the birth of Tegh Bahadur was celebrated in a befitting manner. Friends and relations came from far and near to felicitate the parents and enjoyed the sumptuous sweets and

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delicacies prepared for the guests. It was late spring and the real hot weather had not set in. It made it possible for the Masands (Bishops) to travel to Amritsar and pay homage to Guru Hargobind. They came riding on fine horses and brought all kinds of presents for the family. By the time Tegh Bahadur was born, Amritsar had become a place of pilgrimage. It was associated with Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das but much more so with Guru Arjan Dev who had not only completed the building of Harimandir and the pool of nectar around it, but had installed the *Adi Granth* in it and made Amritsar the spiritual centre of the Sikh faith. When Guru Hargobind constructed the Akal Takht and began issuing orders and edicts to his followers, the city assumed the status of the political capital of the Sikh community. Naturally, it attracted many people from all over Punjab to join in the celebrations connected with the birth of Tegh Bahadur. Besides the social festivities and distribution of alms to the poor, the main function was performed at the Harimandir. It was decorated with brocade and silken shawls and the congregation collected for the non-stop and complete reading of Adi Granth. It was followed by the singing of hymns by the congregation. For hours the singing parties performed Kirtan and won praise for their virtuosity. The celebrations ended with the congregation collecting before the Akal Takht, when Guru Hargobind presented robes of hohour to the leading Sikhs and delivered the final speech exhorting his followers to spread the message of Guru Nanak far and wide.

Tegh Bahadur belonged to a family of Sikh Gurus, the spiritual leaders of the Sikh faith. His father, grandfather and great grandfather held that high office and pontificated from 1574 to 1644, a memorable period of seventy years. They were primarily responsible for preaching and propagating the faith of the new church established by Guru Nanak and organising and consolidating it on a firm basis. They did not belong to the ordinary breed of men; they were stalwarts, men of high stature. Essentially they were religious and spiritual leaders, though at the same time, they happened to be eminent scholars, poets and musicologists. But in their own life, they were religious men, devoted to spiritual pursuits. Their involvement was total; for them it was a mission of supreme importance and as heads of the church, they became identified with it. Their foremost duty was to propagate the teachings of

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Guru Nanak and preserve the identity and the distinct individuality of the new faith. Historically, the new faith was a part of the Bhakti movement but the Bhakti propagators had so many independent sects all over the country, each worshipping its own deity such as Vishnu, Shiva, Rama and Krishna. During the seventh and eighth centuries, the Bhakti movement was confined to South India but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it gained immense popularity in northern India. In the South, it spread like wild-fire among the Alvars and Nayanars and they sang and danced in the ecstasy of their new found devotion to Vishnu and Shiva. It gave rise to many saints and scholars and was responsible for a considerable volume of sacred literature. In the North, it had two branches, one owing devotion to Rama and the other to Krishna. The two together produced great saints and bhagats such as Ramanand, Ravidas, Dhana, Sen, Kabir, Dadu, Tukaram, Nimbhakara, Jnaneshwera, Vallabh and Chaitanya. Each bhagat had his own sect and worshipped its deity in its own individual way. They were separate religious streams running parallel to each other. It must not be forgotten that Bhakti in India is as old as the hills and has been practised from times immemorial. But the concept of Bhakti was, for the first time, presented objectively and lucidly in Bhagvad Gita, which is part of the great epic, Mahabharata. It will be recalled that when, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, the Kauravas and Pandavas stood facing each other, waiting for the word of command, Arjuna was assailed with doubts and he refused to fight because the battle would result in the bloodshed of relations and friends. Krishna, who had declined to participate in the battle but had accepted to serve as Arjuna's charioteer, exhorted Arjuna to fight. He not only solved Arjuna's immediate problem but also expounded the theory and purpose of human actions, the meaning of life and the aim for which man must struggle during his existence on earth. The dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna gave birth to a superb piece of literature, *Bhagvad Gita*. Krishna also presented himself as a personal God and declared that those who worship him with loving devotion would become a part of His Being. Though for *nirvana* or emancipation from the cycle of births and deaths, Krishna advocated the path of action (Karam Marga), yet he was essentially the architect and the greatest propagator of Bhakti Marga and as such came to be worshipped by all his followers.

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Guru Nanak, too, subscribed to the *bhakti marga*. He believed that the Supreme Being could be realised through *bhakti marga* alone and not through *karam marga* or *jnan marga*. Good actions (Karams), he regarded as the basis of ethical life, but ethical life was only the first step towards mystical experience. *Jnan marga*, which meant the path of knowledge or erudition, was not considered as a necessary concomitant for spiritual life. Religion for Guru Nanak was not merely knowing but undergoing an experience of a special kind. The experience is mystical in nature; it is feeling and knowing at a level beyond the sensory one. Bhakti is essentially self-surrender through love and devotion and its disciplines are *simran* and meditation. But despite *simran* and meditation, Guru Nanak gave a high place to *Nadar*, the Grace of God. *Moksha* (emancipation), the ultimate goal of life, is obtained through the Grace of God.

Although Guru Nanak subscribed to the Bhakti cult, he did not believe in Shiva, Vishnu, Rama or Krishna. He navigated in the same stream but had his own ship and flag. And though the Sikh religion, like Hinduism, followed the *bhakti marga*, as a religious faith, it was altogether different. It should be remembered that Sikhism is an eclectic system; Guru Nanak, according to his own light, selected the best that was there in the rich and noble heritage of India. As an Indian, he naturally had to fall back upon the spiritual and mystical experiences handed down by the ancient thinkers, philosophers and sages. He assimilated in his philosophical system, the four fundamental concepts of Hinduism: (1) Samsar, the cycle of rebirths through the transmigration of soul; (2) Karma, which determined the nature of our birth depending upon the deeds performed in our earlier lives; (3) Maya, the concept that the world is an illusion, that it is impermanent and anyone who is attached to worldly things is a victim of maya. It is maya that leads to transmigration; (4) Salvation or Nirvana—the ultimate merging of the Finite into the Infinite. Though he partly accepted the Hindu concept of liberation from the world based on the Karmic law of action, he introduced, as stated above, the idea of the Divine Grace (Nadar). Despite these concepts, which tended to give a Hindu mould to Sikh religion, Guru Nanak formulated, in Mul Mantra, his own concept of God—"The one and only one God, whose name is True, the Creator, the all-pervading, without fear, without hate, immortal, unborn, self-

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existent, enlightener, gracious, true in the beginning, true in primeval age, True He is and true He shall be." He rejected the Hindu gods, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu and Shiva. He rejected the infallibility of Vedas, the superiority of Brahmins, the caste system, the pilgrimages and the rites and rituals of the Hindu faith. He also did away with polytheism, the doctrine of the plurality of gods and all the mythology surrounding them. He denounced the worship of idols and advocated the worship of the one and only God, through *nam-simran*. By the time of the birth of Tegh Bahadur, the Sikhs had a scripture of their own (Guru Granth Sahib), their own church (Harimandir) and there own gurus. Notwithstanding all these differences, the Sikhs were a part of the Hindu social system. Unlike the Muslims, they were not a separate group. Socially, their identity was not established. They lived among the Hindus, inter-married and followed, more or less, the same customs. Therefore, there was the inherent danger that unless their identity was preserved, they would merge with the Hindus. Under the circumstances, the foremost duty of the Guru was to preserve that separate identity of the new faith and to ensure that it would not get lost in the vast sea of Hinduism. It was not a hypothetical danger; it was real and had to be faced squarely. If we cast a glance at the religious history of India, we will notice that several religious movements, several religious sects like Buddhism and Jainism etc., several separate schools of thought which arose in India at different times, were ultimately absorbed by Hinduism. It is because Hinduism is strictly not a religion but a way of life; it permits endless variety of worship and belief. It accepts believers, apostates and agnostics within its fold. So long as people perform certain rites and rituals, believe in caste system and observe a certain pattern of life, they are accepted as Hindus. It is the very freedom and catholicity of Hinduism that endanger the existence of parallel faiths. Based as it is on the rich cultural heritage of India, the range of its philosophical thought is limitless and in its garden every kind of flower can grow. It has a tendency to deify all saints and make them its own. It was against this all-pervading danger that the Gurus had to guard and protect the Sikh religion. It might be added that the danger finally disappeared when the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, initiated the *pahul* ceremony and ordained that all Sikhs should wear five Ks (Kesh, Kangha, Kara, Kirpan & Kachha) and transformed Sikhs

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into Khalsa Panth. A distinct community came into being, with its own scripture, its own church and its own mode of worship, altogether different in appearance, temper and beliefs from all other communities in India.

The second task assigned to every succeeding guru was to propagate the faith and to open new missionary centres with a view to enlarging its sphere of influence. The very fact that Guru Nanak selected his own successor and introduced the system of appointing succeeding pontiffs, was meant to ensure the continuity of the faith. The successor had to carry the message of Guru Nanak far and wide and gain for the faith as many followers and adherents as possible.

Finally, the Gurus had to transform their followers into a united well-knit community. They had to be organised socially, economically and spiritually. The whole system had to be so organised that Sikhs everywhere had a feeling of belonging to a select and unique faith.

With an alien, theocratic government in the country, always on the lookout to destroy the un-Islamic religions in India, the tasks the Gurus had taken upon themselves were stupendous, but it will be seen how successfully they accomplished them notwithstanding the heavy odds they had to fight against.

The great grandfather of Tegh Bahadur was Guru Ram Das (1534-1581), the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. He was born in a very poor family, and his mother died while he was still an infant. His father died when he was seven years old. He was brought up by his maternal grandparents but their financial position was no better than that of his own parents. In short, he spent his childhood in utter poverty and as a young lad earned his livelihood by selling boiled gram. He was, however, a handsome lad and had the natural gift of writing verses. Chance and fortune took him to Goindwal where he attached himself to the service of Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), the third Guru of the Sikhs. The Guru was so impressed by the handsome youth, specially by his humility and selfless devotion to duty that, after watching him for some time, he decided to marry his daughter Bhani to Jetha. Jetha was his original name, though after the marriage he came to be known as Ram Das. As the son-in-law of the Guru, he was assigned important duties. Guru Amar Das had ascended the *gur-gaddi* at the advanced age of seventy-three and his pontification had extended

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over a period of twenty-two years. Notwithstanding his old age, he established twenty-two *manjis* (missionary centres) in the Punjab and thus laid firm foundation of an organisation for the propagation of the Sikh faith. Moreover, by his piety, saintliness and goodwill, he won the friendship of Emperor Akbar, which in many ways, helped to extend the influence of the Sikh church. But because of his old age, much of the work was assigned to his son-in-law Ram Das in preference to his two sons, Mohri and Mohan. Ram Das was diligent and hard-working but he was not particularly ambitious. But his wife, Bibi Bhani, had ideas of her own and was anxious that her husband should be nominated as the next Guru. Among her other duties, she helped her aged father to have his bath every morning. One morning, when he was having his ablutions, Bibi Bhani noticed that one of the feet of the stool on which her father sat was broken. Fearing that her father might fall, she put her hand under the stool. A nail pierced her hand and it began to bleed profusely. When the Guru noticed the blood, he looked round and learnt the cause of it. He was so touched by the devotion of his daughter that he asked her, if there was any boon that he could grant her. She said that she had but one wish that the henceforth Guruship should become hereditary and should be confined to the Sodhi family. The Guru was taken aback but having given his word, he could not withdraw his offer. Though this condition did not debar Mohri or Mohan to be nominated as Guru, Bibi Bhani knew that when the time came, the choice would fall on her husband. And so it happened and Ram Das was nominated as the spiritual head of the faith in 1574. It has, however, been commented upon by some writers that the decision, though undertaken by Guru Amar Das under duress, was an unfortunate one. It seriously restricted the choice of the Guru to a single family whereas earlier the most outstanding man in the whole community could be nominated as Guru on the basis of his talent, spiritual attainments and other capabilities. This view is, however, not accepted by the Sikhs. They believe that the authority for selecting the successor is vested in the Guru alone. It is a spiritual succession; the fire in the one ignites the fire in the other; with one light another is enkindled.

Guru Ram Das pontificated for seven years. His greatest contribution to the Sikh cause was the founding of the city of

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Amritsar. In 1577, he "obtained a grant of the site together with 500 Bighas of land from Emperor Akbar, on payment of Rs 700 *Akbari* to Zamindar of Tung who owned the land." He selected a particular spot and sitting under a tree, ordered the digging of a tank, which he named as Santokhsar (the lake of peace) and then laid the foundation of the town and called it *Guru-ka-chak* After some time, the town came to be called "Ramdaspur" but later when the tank was completed and was renamed as Amritsar (the pool of nectar) the town also came to be known as Amritsar.

Guru Ram Das devoted all his energies to make Amritsar, not only the spiritual centre of the faith and an important place of pilgrimage, but a flourishing commercial centre. He sent for traders, carpenters, blacksmiths, artisans and men of other professions from different cities and encouraged them to settle in Amritsar. He invited men of all faiths so that the city should have a composite character and not become exclusively a communal or religious centre. As Amritsar was situated on the main road that ran from Kabul to Delhi, in due course of time it became a well-known trading centre and as such, became a source of considerable revenue to the State and, incidentally, to the Sikh church.

To augment the resources of the Sikh church, Guru Ram Das appointed Masands at the twenty-two missionary centres who were advised to collect donations from the followers and send them to the Guru. Up to this time, each follower brought presents for the Guru when he came to Amritsar on the festivals of Baisakhi or Diwali but thereafter they were ordained to pay one-tenth of their income to the Masand for the common cause of the community. This innovation not only ensured financial stability of the church but also generated a strong feeling of belonging to the faith and a sense of brotherhood among its followers. It might be mentioned that to some extent this practice of contributing the tithe voluntarily continues till the present times and has been a source of immense strength to the Sikh community. And paradoxically, the individual who gives away one-tenth of his income every month, is much richer than those who have not accepted this special feature of Sikh life. He always has ready money to give to the poor and the needy and his feeling of generosity and goodwill is never curbed for want of resources. It is only a matter of adjustment and once the basic principle is accepted, it becomes a source of immense happiness and satisfaction for the individual concerned.

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Guru Ram Das wrote a great many sacred hymns which form part of the *Adi granth*. He was a consummate poet and experimented in various verse forms. He portrayed every facet of the Sikh faith and through his simple yet meaningful hymns, laid stress on the important aspects of Sikhism, such as *nam*, *simran*, service and *satsang*.

From a very humble beginning, Guru Ram Das rose to the highest pinnacle of the Sikh faith and performed the duties of his high office with such dignity that he made it popular among the rich and the poor and spread its message all over the Punjab.

Tegh Bahadur's grandfather, Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606), apart from his high spiritual attainments, was a very great man in every sense of the word. He was a man of vision, a poet, a musicologist, a philosopher, a statesman and an outstanding organiser. But above all, he was a Yogi and a great spiritual leader. Moreover, he was the first martyr of the Sikh faith. As he was responsible for giving a new turn to the history of the Sikhs and also because he deeply influenced both Tegh Bahadur and his father Guru Hargobind, it is essential to cast a brief glance on some aspects of his life. It will also help us, to some extent, to assess the greatness of the man.

Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606) was a precocious child and flowered early into a youth of significant gifts. Simple, almost ascetic in his habits, he was an erudite scholar, a gifted poet and a young man of uncanny tenacity for hard work. When he ascended the *gur-gaddi* at the age of eighteen, he earned the bitter enemity of his elder brother Prithichand, who being the eldest son, claimed the right of inheriting the spiritual ministry. Prithichand and his son, Meherban, (who in his own right, was a great scholar,) set themselves up as gurus, cornered all the revenues from the Masands, instigated the Mughal authorities against Guru Arjun Dev and intrigued all their lives to bring about the downfall of the Guru. But nothing could deter the resolution of Guru Arjun Dev to continue his work of consolidating and organising the Sikhs. Within a short time the machinations of Prithichand were exposed and the Guru came to occupy his rightful place in Amritsar.

The first task the Guru undertook was that of improving the holy tank at Amritsar by lining its walls and floor with burnt bricks. Thereafter, with the help of artisans and skilled workers, he worked out the architectural design of the temple he wanted to

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build in the centre of the sacred tank. For laying the foundation stone of this temple, he sent for his friend Main Mir, a Muslim divine and a Sufi Saint who lived in Lahore. That a Muslim should be invited to lay the foundation of the most sacred of Sikh temples gives some idea of the catholicity of his mind. It is an incident unparalleled in religious history. On this occasion the Guru declared that all men, whatever their religion, class or caste, were free to enter and worship in this temple. It was a temple for all mankind and keeping this in view, he had four doors built on the four sides of the temple, signifying its universal character. The building of Harimandir was the most significant step undertaken by the Guru, because it provided the first spiritual centre of the Sikh faith.

But the most outstanding and momentous work that Guru Arjun Dev accomplished was the compilation of the *Adi granth*. It contained the writings of the first five gurus and the compositions of some of the celebrated saints and *bhagats* of other faiths whose ideas were in harmony with those of the Gurus. The *Adi granth* became the Koran or the Bible of the Sikhs and once for all provided a distinct entity to the Sikh community. Henceforth, no one could claim to be a Sikh who did not believe and pay homage to *Adi granth*.

Guru Arjun Dev also founded Taran Taran and Kartarpur (near Jullundur) which, in time, became important missionary centres. He also built a Gurdwara in Lahore and had a garden laid at Sirhind known as *guru-ka-bagh*. In 1599, he arranged for the construction of a large tank at Amritsar, which is known as Ram Sar. This place is important because it is here that he composed the incomparable *sukhmani*, the Psalm of Peace.

The Psalm of Peace naturally makes one think of the Guru as a poet. Guru Arjun Dev was a versatile poet and his contribution to *adi granth* is indeed voluminous. His genius was primarily lyrical and he combined deep emotional abandon with intellectual depth. His language is simple, yet highly selective and chiselled; he uses his words and symbols with extreme delicacy. A sense of the sublime pervades in his hymns and there is a feeling that the soul is ever seeking to reunite with the Infinite. His poetry has the most powerful impact of ennobling and uplifting man. Slowly, a kind of peace descends on the reader and his faith comes to rest on a firm foundation. He is the most singable of poets; his

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words appear to be floating in a stream of music. Each hymn is complete in content and style; it is a complete unit portraying some spiritual aspect of life. Most of his hymns are small and yet they provide sufficient food for thought. Even in longer poems, like the Psalm of Peace, each stanza is a gem shining with its inner light. He had a rare capacity to invoke the feeling of the presence of God. For hope and faith, for the peace of restless mind, there are no hymns comparable to those of Guru Arjun Dev. The love of God is presented in an endless variety of ways. While reading his compositions, doubts, fears, illusions, disappear. It is suprising how the most difficult of spiritual and mystical thoughts are presented in a simple and lucid diction. His poetry flows like a crystalline stream over the coloured pebbles of life singing of the boundless love of God. And what a wealth of songs he presents; his bounty is great, his love infinite. All the basic concepts of Sikhism such as *sabad*, *nam*, *guru*, *hukam*, *haumai*, *maya* and the nature of God as *nirguna* and *sarguna*, which were so concisely, almost laconically, presented by Guru Nanak, are described by Guru Arjun Dev in such simple human terms that, notwithstanding their philosophical and mystical connotations, they are easily understood by most people. Every side of life, whether theological or simply ethical, finds a place in the writings of the Guru. It is a rich heritage of perennial value.

Finally, Guru Arjon Dev was the first martyr of the Sikh faith. With his martyrdom, he transformed the Sikh theocracy. His predecessors had taught their followers how to live; Guru Arjun taught them how to die. People who do not know how and when to sacrifice their lives cannot live as free people. Freedom demands a heavy price but it is worth all the sacrifice that a nation can make. The whole history of Sikhism, after the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, is a history of martyrs who, in the words of Guru Gobind Singh, had "to carry their heads on the palms of their hands." Often the very survival of the Sikhs depended on their willingness and readiness to lay their lives for their faith and "faith" in the medieval times had become synonymous with the freedom of worship. It became a pronounced characteristic of the Sikh people throughout the succeeding years of their history and whatever success they can claim in war and peace is primarily due to this great gift bestowed by Guru Arjan Dev. It was a

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significant lesson in the preservation of faith in the face of the tyranny and oppression.

It is but natural that from ancestors of such great spiritual calibre, Tegh Bahadur inherited many traditions. But, like every child, he was deeply influenced in his formative years by his parents and the environment in which he lived. The first and foremost influence on his life was that of his mother. His mother, Nanaki, was deeply religious and all her actions were characterised by great poise and dignity. The nobility of her character and the generosity of her disposition had an enduring influence on Tegh Bahadur. Early in life, he learnt from his mother the ethical way of life; the value of truth, the joy of doing good deeds and happiness and satisfaction that comes from helping the poor and the afflicted. His mother had a natural grace and dignity of her own and though she had little education, the sort that was given to womenfolk in those days such as the reading and writing of Panjabi, initial introduction to the study of *gur-bani* and certain amount of elementary arithmetic, she was fairly conversant with the social and political force which governed the life of the people around her. She knew every detail of the intrigue that led to the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev; the family feuds and the bigotry and intolerance of Emperor Jehangir. She had also learnt about the inhuman tortures inflicted on Guru Arjun Dev. Naturally, she was watchful and sought to protect her two sons, Atal Rai and Tegh Bahadur. Not long before the birth of these two boys her husband had been imprisoned in the Gwalior fort and all through the period, she had suffered the agony of uncertainty. She had prayed long and hard and God in His mercy had responded to her prayers and though there were extraneous influences that helped the release of the Guru, yet for her, it was the gift of God Almighty. Though by the time the boys had started going to school, Guru Hargobind had established a working rapport with the Emperor, yet the future was uncertain, the Emperor and his henchmen could not be trusted. Moreover, to her mind, the militaristic style of her husband's life, the raising of an army and the building of a fort outside Amritsar presaged war and it was clear as daylight that war with the mighty Mughal Empire extending from Afghanistan to Assam would be unequal and disastrous. Twice or thrice she tried to argue with her husband but he brushed her aside. It was a matter

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he would not discuss with women. Her inability to influence the course of events made her resort to ever-increasing hours of prayer and meditation. She spent a lot of time attending to the household duties and sought satisfaction in watching her sons grow into healthy boys. But, on the whole, fate was unkind to her. She was destined to watch the death of one son under mysterious circumstance and the end of the other as a martyr. Her faith in God, however, remained unshaken and it was this trust in the ultimate justice and mercy of God that she passed on to her two sons. Atal Rai died early but she kept vigil over Teg Bahadur until he was summoned to Delhi and left Anandpur on his last journey accompanied by his three companions Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dayal Das. Tegh Bahadur, on his part, was deeply attached to his mother which is evident from the fact that though he wrote most of his sacred hymns in the later years of his life, he addressed many of them to his mother. This attachment, between the mother and the son, lasted all through their lives.

It was, however, his father, Guru Hargobind, who, because of his charismatic and dominant personality and adventurous exploits, had the greatest influence on the life of Teg Bahadur. Guru Hargobind was a tall, powerfully built man with a visage that commanded attention. He had high cheek bones and large dark brown deep set eyes. His dark beard spread wide below his chin and his moustaches curled upwards. There was an expression of pride and hauteur in his face. He was not only in appearance but in temperament a leader of men. He was a man of few words but they were uttered mostly as orders which were meant to be strictly obeyed. He sufferred no fools and attracted mostly men of action around him. He was courteous and considerate towards men of religion or men assigned to high religious duties but he gave them no legal authority to lay down the law like the Muslim Ulemas and divines. He was the first law-giver among the Sikh Gurus as he was the first soldier-saint of the Sikh faith. He was also the first to adopt a regal style of life; the *gur-gaddi* was no longer simply an exalted seat of the highest spiritual authority but it became a kingly throne as well.

Guru Hargobind paid a great deal of attention to his clothes and dressed carefully for each occasion. Generally speaking, he adopted the Mughal style of dress. For ceremonial occasions,

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when a large audience was collected in front of the Akal Takht, particularly on the occasion of Baisakhi and Diwali, he wore large flowing dresses made of brocade cloth woven with golden thread. Round his neck, he wore several necklaces of precious stones. On his turban was an aigrette of multi-coloured feathers and sometimes a spray of jewels. He carried a hawk on his left fore-finger. He wore not one but two swords, one the symbol of *miri* (temporal authority) and the other the symbol of *piri* (spiritual authority). In winter when he went out for the chase, he put on a leather jacket and corduroy churidaras suited for hunting expeditions. For the battlefield, he was always clad in a coat of mail. At the time of prayer and meditation, he wore spotlessly white garments.

In spite of his imprisonment and his awareness of the might of the Mughal Empire, he raised a small army of his own. According to Mohsin Fani, a Mughal historian, he had "eight hundred horses in his stables, 300 troopers on horseback and sixty men with fire-arms" as his body guards. The number of his soldiers continued to increase as all the malcontents and fugitives joined his forces. Majha and Malwa were the land of Jats and they were hardy and chivalrous people and many of them found in Guru Hargobind an ideal leader. Many adventurous souls, tired of the dull and routine life on the farm, were attracted by the spoils of war and joined the Guru's army. Many others were happy if they got two meals a day and two changes of uniforms every year. As Guru Hargobind fought all his battles against the Mughal authorities, he was popular among the Hindus and many soldiers from the hilly regions of the Punjab came to join his forces. He also recruited many Pathan merceneries in his army. One of the Pathan Chiefs, Painda Khan, held a high office in his army. It is said that many fugitives such as Ram Partap, the Raja of Jaisalmer and Yar Khan and Khunja Sarai, dismissed from the Mughal army, came to serve under the Guru's banner. In this way, the size of the army continued to grow. The Guru built a small fortress outside Amritsar for the purposes of defence against possible attacks in the future. He arranged for the military training of his followers and introduced a strict code of discipline among them. He advised the Masands and his followers to send horses and weapons as presents. He encouraged hunting and shooting and often personally led the chase. When he was

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pleased, he gave swords, bows and arrows as prizes. He awakened the martial spirit among the subdued and down-trodden people and raised their confidence in themselves and their leader. In short, he did everything to cast out fear from the hearts of his men and strove to make them a strong, united militaristic people.

By adopting the regal ways of the Mughals, Guru Hargobind completely changed the life-style usually associated with Sikh Gurus. All the preceding Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Arjun Dev, led strictly saintly lives, devoted most of their time to prayer and meditation and went about preaching the gospel from place to place. They were primarily concerned with the life of the spirit and had little to do with the political affairs of the state. They lived a simple life and had no attraction for the pomp and glory of the world. Generally speaking, they avoided the rich and sought the company of the poor and spent a great deal of time in spiritual pursuits such as the reading of the scripture, and the composition of sacred hymns. Their ultimate aim was to seek the impersonal, all-pervading, ineffable Absolute. No doubt as spiritual leader of the Sikh community, Guru Hargobind carried on the tradition of Guru Nanak and laid considerable emphasis on prayer, meditation and the propagation of the faith but he set aside the *seli* and *topi*, the symbols of the Yogis, and put on the robes of royalty. During his own time, many of the leading Sikhs were disturbed by these revolutionary changes but could do little about it. Bhai Gurdas, who was a contemporary of Guru Hargobind, vividly portrays in one of his *vars*, the great change that he noticed in the pattern of life adopted by the Guru.

People say the former Gurus used to sit in the temple;
The present Guru remaineth not in one place.
The former Emperors used to visit the former Gurus;
The present Guru was sent in the fortress by the Emperor.
In former times the Guru's darbar could not contain the sect;
The present Guru leadeth a roving life and feareth nobody.
The former Gurus, sitting on their thrones, used to console the Sikhs;
The present Guru keepeth dogs and hunteth,

Macauliffe, Sikh Religion, Vol. IV, pp. 76-77.

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The former Gurus used to compose hymns, listen to them and sing them;
The present Guru composeth no hymns, nor listens to them nor singeth them.
He keeps not his Sikh followers with him but takes enemies of his faith and wicked persons as his guides and familiars.
I say, the truth within him cannot possibly be concealed,
The true Sikhs, like the humble bees, are enamoured of his lotus feet,
He supporteth a burden intolerable to others and asserteth not himself.

Bhai Gurdas is perfectly right that the Guru carried an "intolerable burden"—the burden of the heavy responsibility of keeping alive the faith during the reigns of Jahangir and Shahjehan when the liberal policy of Akbar had been replaced by theocratic fanaticism. The Guru kept the secret to himself and continued to prepare his people, as best as the times permitted, for the ultimate victory over the Mughals in the distant future.

No doubt this change of life-pattern worried his mother and some of the leading Sikhs, but Tegh Bahadur was deeply impressed by the grandeur and militaristic deportment of his father. As he grew older, it was his father who attracted him; the love of his mother slowly receded to the background. It was but natural that he should have been deeply influenced by a father of such bold and vivacious character. But it was not only the spirited soldier, the hunter and the fighter in his father that appealed to him but equally, the spiritual depth of the father, the Yogi in him, that fascinated Tegh Bahadur. This was a private facet of his life and was known only to the members of the family. It was interwoven in the daily routine of his life but remained unexposed to public view. Most of the aspects of Guru's life mentioned by Bhai Gurdas were correct: he was a restless person wandering from place to place; he often visited the Emperor's court and had been imprisoned; he associated with Muslims and went out hunting and he did not compose any hymns. But it is certainly incorrect to say that he did not attend the service at Harimandir or other Gurdwaras and did not listen to the Kirtan there. If we cast a glance on the daily routine of his life at Amritsar, we will get a clear idea of the type of man the Guru was.

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Long before the third watch of the night, Guru Hargobind usually rose from his bed. A thin taper burnt in an alcove in a corner of the room; its wavering and unsteady flame sent out a thin smoky pencil upward and produced dancing shadows on the walls. He stepped down from a large canopied bed on a thick carpet and went to the window and, parting its silken curtains watched the stars for a few moments. It was a large room tastefully furnished in Mughal style, with multi-coloured carpets and silken tapestries hanging from the walls. A few settees with carved backs and arms, studded with crystal shaped ivory pieces, clustered near the windows. On the wall, facing the bed, hung a number of swords, spears, shields and other weapons. Guru Hargobind took a tiny silver bell from his bed-side table and shook, it just once. A door opened softly and a tall, thin man stepped in, and, with folded hands, bowed deeply. No words were spoken. He picked up the taper from the alcove and stepped outside the room followed by the Guru. He led the way to the bathroom, where large brass vessels, freshly filled with water, awaited the Guru. After the bath, the Guru emerged dressed all in white and was led again by the attendant, with the taper held high in his hand, to another room. It was a small room with bare walls, with two large windows opening in the courtyard. A brightly coloured drugget with geometrical pattern covered the floor. In the centre of the room lay a cotton-stuffed mattress with a pure white sheet spread over it. A small earthen oil lamp vaguely lighted the room. As soon as the Guru entered the room, the attendant softly closed the door and withdrew. Guru Hargobind sat cross-legged on the mattress, closed his eyes and within a few moments, entered into *samadhi*, attuned to the ultimate Reality, completely disassociated from the world of senses. He meditated for three hours and finally emerged from it with a sense of peace and supreme fulfilment. When he emerged from the room, there was a strange glow on his face and in his large brown eyes, the depth of the seas.

He left the house almost immediately. Two tall, well-built, fully armed men, stationed outside the house, followed him some ten yards behind. They walked bare-footed and made sure that their presence in no way disturbed the Guru. Every morning, the the two bodyguards followed him to Harimandir and back to *guru-ke-mahal*.

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He was received at the gate of the Gurdwara by some of the leading Sikhs and was escorted to the Harimandir. The Guru and his companions bowed before the sacred book, Guru Granth Sahib, and the Guru sat on the right of Bhai Buddha, the high priest of the temple. He sat throughtout the service, which consisted of the singing of the hymns (*kirtan*), the reading of the scripture and dissertation on one of the hymns and the final prayer (*ardas*). After the service, the Guru went back to *guru-ke-mahal.*

The breakfast was frugal and did not take much time. Dressed in the uniform of the supreme commander, the Guru went out riding on a horse, to inspect the parade of his regiments. The whole morning was spent with his officers and men, issuing instructions about the training of soldiers and forging of weapons. Lohgarh was his regimental centre and here he discussed with his company commanders every aspect of the military establishment.

He returned home before noon and, if he felt like it, he had some fruit or a glass of butter-milk, and after changing his clothes, he went straight to Akal Takht. There he had his administrative office and a lot of work connected with the financial and organisational aspects of the community demanded his attention. He studied the reports sent by the Masands and the messages or letters received from various individuals or missionary centres. In addition to administrative duties, there were always many visitors who wanted to meet him. For an hour or two, he was busy issuing instructions, signing papers and receiving visitors.

Lunch was followed by a long siesta, which made up for the short sleep at night. It was a very wise Indian tradition; it helped everyone to relax and at the same time avoid the burning sun of the day.

The evenings were occupied in a variety of ways. Two days a week were assigned to settling disputes among the Guru's followers and the local gentry. Occasionally rural sports like wrestling, *gatka* and *kabadi* were organised but more often the army units competed in swordsmanship, fencing, riding and tentpegging. In winter, the Guru often went out hunting or seeing friends and relations in neighbouring towns and villages. Now and then bards and singing parties staged performances. But the fact was that his restless spirit would not let him stay long at one place and he went out travelling all over the Punjab making contacts and in the process established new centres of faith.

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When it became dark and one by one the stars appeared in the firmament, he generally went to his private cloister and meditated for an hour or two, but occasionally he went to Harimandir and joined the Sangat in the evening service. After dinner, he usually retired early.

Such a father and his particular pattern of life had a marked impact on the mind of Tegh Bahadur. As he grew older, he was thrilled by the martial spirit and militaristic activities of his father, but he also noticed the Yogi in his father, the long hours of meditation and his unshakable faith in God. These two aspects of his father's personality deeply influenced the making of his own character.

Tegh Bahadur's childhood and adolescent years were spent in a unique home. It was the house of a Guru, a religious leader, who was at the same time, a prince. It was as though the two opposing forces of *bhakti* (devotion) and *shakti* (power) had coalesced and accepted to live together. Guru Hargobind was first a Guru and then a prince. Hence the atmosphere of the house was essentially religious. The life of the whole family was linked with Harimandir. In the morning, and evening, the whole family went to Harimandir and joined the *sangat* in singing Kirtan and listening to *gurbani* and its exposition. As the days merged into years, Tegh Bahadur, steeped in this atmosphere, felt the awakening of the inner spirit which set him on the path of spiritual quest. As he grew older, he increasingly withdrew from social life and devoted himself to spiritual pursuits.

But the other aspect of the home could not be ignored. It was a house of a prince who commanded regiments of soldiers and cavalrymen. The army gave a new dimension to the life of the family. The Guru was escorted by cavalrymen when he went out to inspect parades. There was the sound of the bugle, the beating of drums, the word of command reverberating across the horizon. There was the sense of urgency among men learning the use of arms and men forging weapons. The whole paraphernalia of a regimental centre had come into being with its recruiting centre, training of soldiers and cavalrymen and the selection of commanders. For Tegh Bahadur and his brothers, it must have been an exhilarating experience to watch the army exercises and share the martial spirit arising from it.

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There was another aspect of his environment which sharpened his sensibilities and, early in life, made him understand the ways of the world. To the Guru's home, came all manner of men; fakirs, sadhus, mendicants, sufis and others who wanted to discuss religious or spiritual problems. There also came the rich and the poor, nobles and princes, scholars and pandits, thieves and vagabonds and ordinary men and women, each with his own problem, each seeking the blessings and assistance of the Guru. There came men ladden with sorrow, men disappointed and frustrated, men with dark and dreary lives and they all bowed and sought the touch of Guru's healing hand. Tegh Bahadur watched them come and go and learnt much about the unending suffering of mankind and the type of men that go to the making of this world. He often thought how he could help the suffering humanity and lessen its pain and sorrow.

Tegh Bahadur went to school at the age of six. Three systems of education were prevalent at that time : the Gurukul System, the Patshalas run by Brahmins and the Madrasahas run by Molvis. They were mostly meant for the elite, the masses were mostly illiterate. Moreover, education was not altogether secular; it was closely connected with religion. It can be assumed that for some time, Tegh Bahadur went to a Patshala at Amritsar and learnt the three R's—reading, writing and arithmetic. But since the family was frequently travelling from place to place, Guru Hargobind appointed private tutors for his children. Fortunately Guru Hargobind had amongst his followers highly learned and accomplished men who were admirably suited to impart education. The two most remarkable men to whom, among others, the task of educating Tegh Bahadur was assigned were Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Buddha. They were both highly eminent Sikhs who had enjoyed the privilege of long association with the families of the Gurus.

Bhai Gurdas was the son of the brother of Guru Amar Das and his cousin's sister was married to Guru Ram Das. He spent his early life under the care and patronage of Guru Amar Das and was a friend and playmate of Guru Arjun Dev. He was a great scholar of Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi and Punjabi. He was also an eminent poet and his *vars* serve as a commentary on the writings of Gurus and are regarded as "Key" to Guru Granth Sahib. He was sent out on many important missions by the Gurus but the most memorable event of his life was the writing of the first copy

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of *Adi granth* with his own hand. When Guru Arjun Dev had compiled the *Adi granth*, the honour of writing the first copy was bestowed upon him. For some time, Bhai Gurdas served as the chief organiser of the missionary centre at Agra and helped to propagate the faith in Uttar Pradesh.

Bhai Buddha had a much longer association with the Gurus than even Bhai Gurdas. He had the distinction of having been initiated into the new faith by Guru Nanak. He was a venerable old man who had the honour of having arranged ceremonies connected with the pontification of five Gurus after Guru Nanak. After the compilation of the *Adi granth*, he was appointed the first Granthi (Head Priest) of Harimandir. He had watched the infant church grow to maturity and had participated in many momentous events in its life. He was invariably consulted by the Gurus about every major problem facing the panth and was sent on many important missions. He was specially selected as the tutor of Guru Hargobind. He was a wise old man, who had seen much and was regarded as the embodiment of knowledge.

Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Buddha were the general supervisors of the education of Guru Hargobind's children. Apart from the teaching of arithmetic, history and geography, the main stress was laid on four subjects : languages, the study of *Adi granth*, music and military training. So far as languages were concerned, special attention was paid to in Gurmukhi script because it was not only the mother-tongue but the language in which *Adi granth* was written. ? Braj Bhasha was taught because it was the language of the masses and, Persian, because it was the court language. Sanskrit, it can be presumed, was taught at some later stage. It served as a link with the cultural heritage of India. From the writings of (Guru) Tegh Bahadur, it is evident that of all languages, he was deeply attached to Braj Bhasha.

The study of *Adi granth* was naturally given the most prominent place in the educational arrangement made for the children of Guru Hargobind. It contained the sacred writings of the first five Gurus and an intensive study of *Adi granth* was imperative for the understanding of the philosophy and tenets of the Sikh faith. Tegh Bahadur and his brothers were required to commit to memory some of the prayers that are recited at different times of the day. They had also to study the basic philosophical and ethical principles of Sikhism, so that if, at any time, anyone of them was called

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upon to act as the head of the church, he should be able to perform his duties with grace, acumen and dignity. Under the guidance of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Buddha, Tegh Bahadur studied not only his own religion but other religions and schools of philosophical thought prevalent in India. But above all, the two elderly sages introduced him to the world of mysticism and the code of discipline and conduct necessary for it. It was the most important and most difficult part of the education of Tegh Bahadur. But strangely, even in his adolescent years, he felt drawn to the deeper philosophical and mystical aspects of religion as though there was a hunger within him which demanded satisfaction. Early in his life, he witnessed the death of several persons to whom he was deeply attached and he felt disturbed when he could not comprehend its nature and significance. Death symbolised the transitoriness of man's sojourn on earth, the uncertainty and capriciousness of life. His obsession with death led him to seek the meaning and purpose of life. With the passage of time, he felt dissatisfied with scholastic pursuits and turned inwards for the answer to the questions that haunted him.

The third important subject of his study was music. Music is an integral part of *Adi granth*. Unlike any other scripture, it is the only one in which all the hymns have been written in terms of the Ragas and Raginies of Indian classical music. All the Gurus and *bhagats* whose works are included in *Adi granth* wrote in verse form and these were classified by Guru Arjun Dev according to the Ragas in which each hymn was composed. For a deeper understanding of the hymns, it is essential to have some understanding of classical music. Tegh Bahadur himself utilised fifteen ragas for the expression of his thoughts and feelings. It is obvious that he must have studied music as a young man and had become conversant with the different modes of classical music.

Music is also important because in Sikhism great stress is laid on the singing of hymns. Right from the time of Guru Nanak, hymns were sung both by the professional singers and the Sangat (Congregation). Music is a well established tradition of the Sikh religion and the proper rendering of Gurbani can be achieved only when each composition is sung in the raga in which it is composed. It is for this reason that eminent singers of Gurbani are given a place of prestige in the Sikh community.

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It will be recalled that Guru Nanak was accompanied almost everywhere by Mardana who played on his *rabab* (rebeck) while Guru Nanak sang his own hymns. Like the Sufis, Guru Nanak used music to transport himself into the world of ecstasy where he felt one with the Infinite. Music uplifts and ennobles human emotions and has a magical influence on men and women. When great music is wedded to the singing of spiritual hymns, a great emotional upsurge rises in the heart of the devotee and he is carried away on the ethereal wings of music to the pure regions of the spirit. It is probably an experience which is nearest to spiritual or mystic experience.

It is for this reason that early in life Tegh Bahadur received a great deal of systematic training in music.

Finally, we come to the military training of Tegh Bahadur. Guru Hargobind was aware that troublous times lay ahead and he was at pains to provide as much military training to his followers as his limited resources permitted. Under the circumstances, it became essential that he should arrange for his sons to learn the art of war as best as they could. There were plenty of skilled warriors around who were too happy to teach the boys the use of weapons. Bidhi Chand, who was once a robber and later renounced his old profession and joined the army of Guru Hargobind and was known for his valour and military leadership, was assigned the task of training Tegh Bahadur and his brothers. The boys took to the training enthusiastically and eagerly learnt riding, archery, fencing and shooting. As they grew older, they often joined their father in his hunting expeditions. They also took keen interest in military exercises and got some inkling of the way wars were fought. Early in life, they watched and even took part in the skirmishes with Mughal forces. Even though as a young lad, Tegh Bahadur enjoyed learning the art of riding and the use of weapons, temperamentally, he was drawn to scholastic pursuit, particularly to the study of poetry and philosophy. His disposition and habitual frame of mind was inclined to quiet and sustained thinking and he enjoyed nothing more than long walks by himself in the countryside. The bugle, the trumpet, the drums and the din of war excited and thrilled him but not for long. Instinctively, he preferred the quiet corner, the oil lamp and the books around him. It appears that despite the desire of his father to make him a soldier and the training imparted to him, he

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was steadily drifting towards the life of a recluse. The overall impact of his education and environment was to turn him inward and his own mystic bent of mind led him to devote greater attention to spiritual aspects of life. Though he participated in the social life of the family and the community, he was essentially a recluse, given to solitary contemplation.

Tradition, training and environments were inexorably shaping the destiny of Tegh Bahadur. During his childhood, the family passed through a stormy period and each incident left an indelible mark on his personality. As we shall see, the march of events and his own inner urges were slowly but relentlessly leading him towards the crowning glory of his life—the great martyrdom.

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2

The Tale of Two Dynasties

This is the story of two dynasties; a spiritual dynasty and an imperial dynasty. The leader of the one was Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and that of the other, Babar (1483-1530). The history of the two dynasties ran parallel to each other for a period of more than two centuries. The last of the Sikh gurus, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) and the last of the Mughals, Aurangzeb (1658-1707) ended their earthly sojourn about the same time. The dynasty of Guru Nanak consisted of saints and godly men and that of Babar of kings and princes. Guru Nanak and his successors sought the world of spirit; Babar and his descendants sought to establish an empire. Guru Nanak's dynasty disowned the world and rejected its power and pelf. Babar's dynasty went all out to conquer a new world and capture all its riches. Both were successful in their own ways; one by establishing a new faith and the other by establishing a new kingdom. Both sought to sway the hearts of men; one by love, the other by power. Both tried to influence the lives of the people; one by offering inner peace and contentment and the other by offering power, position and worldly goods. Both had their trials and tribulation, pain and suffering; the one overcame them by prayer and worship, the other drowned them in wine and narcotics. Both the leaders and their successors travelled from one end of India to the other; one on foot, kindling hope and sharing happiness and the other rode over the land bringing death and destruction, burning homes and demolishing temples. But in the final analysis, the faith of Guru Nanak's dynasty lives and flourishes and is fast spreading over the four corners of the world; the dynasty of Babar, despite its victories, its pomp and glory, its forts and palaces is dead and forgotten

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and is remembered only by its mausoleums and tomb-stones.

But the story of the dynasties is interesting. Sharing the same period of history and operating in the same field of northern India, they impinged on each other and influenced the course of history.

The leaders of the two dynasties were in their own way fascinating individuals. Guru Nanak had a compelling personality; aureoled and magnetic. Men felt drawn to him. There was something in his bold shining visage, something in the depth of his brown eyes, something in the mystic atmosphere he generated, that had an instantaneous impact on all those who met him. His gestures were brief but significant; his voice deep and resonant. With the magic of his words and the music of his hymns, he attracted crowds and by the directness of his sermons and his innate humility and the subtlety of his humour, he transformed the thinking of men. He was a most unusual Sadhu, who denounced asceticism and monasticism, advocated normal family life and at the same time, insisted on salvation through meditation and *nam-simran*. To gain some understanding of Guru Nanak, it is imperative to review, however succinctly, the three phases of life—his childhood and early youth, his travels and his last eighteen years at Kartarpur.

The Janamsakhi tradition provides delightful incidents about his childhood. They are not stories or fables or mythology; at best they can be described as hagiography or folk-lore. For example, when as a child he went to study at a Pathshala or a Madrasah, he confounded the Pandit and the Maulvi by asking questions about the ultimate Reality; when invested with the sacred thread, he asked for a thread that would neither break nor burn nor get soiled and would accompany the spirit after death; when his self-imposed silence worried his parents and they called the village hakim, he asked him if he knew of the pain that effects the spirit. There are many more stories of the same kind. All these stories were meant to indicate the early emergence of the spiritual awakening in the heart of young Nanak. His father Mehta Kalu tried to engage his attention in worldly pursuits and as a last measure, arranged his marriage but everything failed to wean Nanak away from the company of fakirs, sadhus and ascetics. He was delighted when his son-in-law, Jai Ram, arranged for Nanak's appointment as a store-keeper of a granary in the

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service of Daulat Khan Lodi at Sultanpur. Guru Nanak accepted the appointment and for some years worked as a store-keeper. But apart from the time spent at Modikhana, he was mostly engaged in prayer and meditation. Here, at Sultanpur, early one morning when he sat meditating on the bank of the river Bein, he underwent the unique mystic experience of standing face to face before God. It was a deep trance, lasting three days, during which he experienced the meeting of the finite with the Infinite. It is impossible to describe this experience; there are no words or conceptual images to portray it. When Guru Nanak regained consciousness, and returned to the town, his first words were, "There is no Hindu and no Musalman." He proclaimed the brotherhood of man and the uni y of Godhead. He gave up his job and decided to devote the rest of his life to the preaching of the message of God.

During the second phase of his life, Guru Nanak undertook four long journeys on foot; in the East, he went as far as Assam, up North he went into the heart of Tibet, down South he went as far as Ceylon and travelling westward, he visited Mecca and Baghdad. On these journeys, he was accompanied by Mardana, who played on the *rabab* while Guru Nanak sang his hymns. Visiting every pilgrim spot on the way, he held discussions with the leaders of other faiths and presented his own concept of religion. At Hardwar, he denounced the empty rituals; at Kurukshetra, he delivered a discourse on the futility of bathing at pilgrim spots; at Puri he sang about the true *arti* of the Lord wherein the salvar was the sky and stars and planets, its lamps; on Mount Sumair he told the *siddhas* that renunciation was no way to serve humanity or achieve salvation; at Mecca he preached the omnipresence of God. Everywhere by the impact of his personality, the simplicity of his faith and the passionate devotional music of his hymns, he transformed the life of men who had the good fortune to meet him.

The third phase covers the last eighteen years of his life which he spent at Kartarpur. In the fulness of his experience, he not only collated his earlier hymns but wrote some of his major works during this period. Discarding the caste system and the empty rites and rituals, he preached and practised a way of life which combined the sacred and the secular and paved the way for achieving *moksh* or *nirvan*. Guru Nanak was a mystic and for him religion had no meaning without the mystical experience. Mystical

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experience was the one and only way of achieving union with God, which was the ultimate purpose of life and religion. To this end, Guru Nanak worked out a system of ethical living coupled with *nam-simran* which led to the exalted state of mind wherein such union was possible.

Though the concept of God as formulated by Guru Nanak in Mul Mantra is highly abstract, he further developed the idea and presented God as *sarguna* (with attribute) and *nirguna* (without attributes) and finally presented the concept of a personal God in the form of lover, father, mother, brother, companion and friend—God who can be won over through love and devotion. God manifests Himself through His creation but most of all through His indwelling in the human soul. The relationship of God and human soul is described as follows:

> Thou art the spirit that pervadeth all,
> It's thy light that lighteth all hearts.

again,

> Oh, my mind, thou art the embodiment
> of Light; know they essence.

And *nam* or Name is the fountain head of all inspiration, the mystic formula of meditation, the talisman that helps man to cross the sea of Samsara, the comfort of all souls, the medicine of all ills and the one and only link with the ultimate Reality. And Guru Nanak in his hymns asks for one and only gift; the gift of *nam*.

> Thou, O Lord, art the Supreme Person, Infinite
> tree on which is perched the bird of my soul;
> Bless Thou Nanak with Thy immaculate Name
> that he may praise Thy word ever.

Guru Nanak preached the philosophy of world and life affirmation. To him the world was not a vale of tears but a place where the Lord Himself lived and, therefore, he advocated that life should be rich, full of work and activity. He believed that the human soul was part of the Divine Soul and the aim of each

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successive life was to rise higher and higher spiritually until the human spark was absorbed in the Eternal Fire of which it was a part.

> When the Lord hath mercy, one contemplates him;
> And tender becomes the soul and one is attuned to him;
> And then one's soul merges in the Absolute one,
> And the complexes of the mind are re-absorbed in the mind.

Such was Guru Nanak, a mystic, a spiritual leader, a great traveller, a lover of mankind, a poet and a teacher. To maintain the continuity of his faith, he appointed Guru Angad as his successor some time before his ascension.

And what kind of man was Zahir-ud-Din Muhammad Babar, the leader of the imperial dynasty ? When Babar was born, his maternal grandfather, Younus Khan, called him 'tiger' and a tiger he remained all his life; dauntless, daring, spirited and ever ready for a fight. Often, before a battle, he invited the commander of the opposing army to fight single-handed with him and in that manner decide the outcome of the war. Generally his challenge was not accepted but once, outside Kabul where the two armies stood face to face, the opposing commander, though himself reluctant to fight, found five men in his regiment who were willing to face Babar one by one. Each man came riding on a horse with a drawn sword and measured his strength against Babar. Babar riding on a horse fought with each one of them and unhorsed all of them. His moral victory was so great that the other side retired without a fight. One is not surprised at Babar's audacity and defiance of danger when one remembers that in his veins ran the blood of two mighty warriors of Central Asia, Chengiz Khan and Timur.

Babar was born in Farghana in Trans-Oxiana, in the present Russian province of Uzbekistan. His father, Umar Shaikh Mirza died early and Babar became king at the age of eleven. The next ten years Babar spent fighting against the tribal chiefs of this cold, barren mountainous valley. There were bitter tribal rivalries and the general principal of life was each for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Loyalties were changed overnight and it was the successful warrior who had the largest following. Babar was inordinately ambitious and his one dream was to sit on the

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ancestral throne of Samarkand, which was once the capital city of Timur's kingdom. Samarkand was a city of forts, palaces, magnificent buildings, mosques, colleges and spacious gardens. There was a flavour of the Arabian Nights about it. Twice Babar succeeded in occupying it but he could not retain it for long. He was passing through the most adventurous period of life, losing and winning different principalities in that region. The wheel of fortune was turning all the time: one day he was a king and the next day he was hiding in mountain caves amidst snow-storms and icy winds. But he was fast learning the art of warfare and gaining the reputation of an intrepid and resolute leader of men. In 1504 taking advantage of the rebellion in other parts of the dominion of Uzbeks, who were his bitterest enemies, he occupied Kabul. Sometime later he conquered Kandahar. He soon realised that he had no future in Trans-Oxiana and all that he could claim as his his own were Kabul and Kandahar. But his restless spirit was clamouring for greater adventure and achievement. He had another dream, the dream of conquering Hindustan. He wanted to conquer Hindustan for three reasons; first, for its wealth; second, because he claimed suzerainty over Punjab by the strange logic that in 1398-99 it was conquered by his ancestor Timur; and the last reason was that he felt that he had to bestow estates on all the members of the family besides the friends and followers who had collected around him at Kabul. He raided India thrice in 1503, 1509 and 1520. But his real chance came when because of the disaffection and rivalries at the Delhi Court, he was invited by Daulat Khan, Governor of Punjab, to invade India. On 21 April, 1526, he fought the historic battle of Panipat against the vastly numerically superior army of Ibrahim Lodi and as he puts it in his autobiography, "By the grace and mercy of Almighty God . . . in the space of half a day, the mighty army was laid in the dust." His success was due to three factors: the use of artillery, both big guns and muskets, the well organised, compact and trained troops and above all, the superior strategy and generalship of Babar. With the defeat of the Lodi Sultan, Babar laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India. But this did not end Babar's troubles. In less than a year's time, on 17 March, 1527, he had to fight another battle of great consequence at Khanva against a seasoned warrior of great fame, Rana Sanga and a well-organised and cohesive army of the

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Rajputs. For the first time the Rajputs had succeeded in forming a confederacy and had also gained the support of many non-Rajput chiefs. Babar was aware of the formidable forces collected against him and had some idea of the traditional valour and spirit of sacrifice of the Rajputs. He was conscious that odds were heavy and probably the die was cast against him but he was too seasoned a soldier, extremely proud of his lineage, to abandon the battlefield. To raise the spirit of his men and to steel their determination, he enacted a great drama. He dashed his cup and spilled all the wine and vowed to forsake drinking if God would grant him victory. He delivered a brave speech reminding his men that death was the natural end of life and, therefore, if they had to die, why not die a glorious death. Giving the battle a religious tinge, he added, "if we are vanquished, we die as martyrs but if we conquer, we have won His holy cause." Finally, he made them swear on the Holy Quran to fight to the finish. Needless to say, he won the battle, the most decisive battle of his life, He realised his dream, won an empire for himself and his children and his ceaseless quest for fortune came to an end.

There was little time left for him to consolidate his empire. He died on 26 December 1530. There is the delightful fairy story about his going four times round the bed of his sick son, Humayun, and praying that the illness of his son may be transferred to him and in his way he sacrificed his life! The gods are usually not so propitious and obliging.

To gain an insight into the character of Babar, we have to fall back on *Tuzuk-i-Baburi*—the Memoirs of Babar, probably the best thing Babar left for posterity. Though incomplete they tell us how great, cultivated and accomplished a prince he was. A great lover of poetry, he himself wrote verses both in Turki and Persian. He was an acute observer of men and manners; his Memoirs are full of pen-portraits of his relations and friends and his assessment of their character. He was a kind father, a gracious friend and a loyal comrade. He loved nature and wrote tenderly about the sharp, cool mountainous air of Kabul, the river running down the steps of his palace, the gardens he had laid out, the trees and flowers and about his love of melons and grapes. He loved wine and narcotics and enjoyed the company of friends. He was deeply religious and had great faith in God. A fine swordsman, a great tactician and a born leader of men. To

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the ruthlessness and restlessness of the Mongol character, he brought the refinement and urbanity of the Persians. Such was Babar, the founder of the imperial dynasty.

Did Guru Nanak meet Babar? Was there a confrontation or clash of ideas between the too? According to the Janamsakhi tradition, the two leaders met under strange and unexpected circumstances. The Janamsakhi which was discovered in the East India Company's library in London and was brought to India in 1883, gives a brief account of their meeting. Wandering through the Punjab, Guru Nanak, accompained by some fakirs, reached Sayyidpur (now known as Eminabad). It so happened that at that time many Pathan marriages were being celebrated in the town but when the fakirs begged for food, they were turned away. The Guru and the fakirs went to the house of Lalo, a poor and humble disciple of Guru Nanak, who served them as best he could. Here Lalo asked the Guru about the reported arrival of Babar in Punjab and the atrocities committed by his soldiers. Guru Nanak's reaction is embodied in the fifth hymn of Raga Tilang (Adi Granth pp. 722-23). He described the politico-social condition of the Punjab in a graphic manner ;

Modesty and righteousness both have vanished
Falsehood reign Supreme, O, Lalo
Both the Qazi and the Brahmin are out of work
And devil reads the marriage service.

Regarding Babar, Guru Nanak says :
With evil as his best man,
Bringing a crowd of sins in his bridal procession.
Like bridegroom Babar has hastened from Kabul
To seize by force as his bride, O, Lalo,
The wealth of Hindustan.

Babar is described as the embodiment of evil, bringing destruction and devastation in his wake. The suffering of men and women and their pitiable conditions are painted in graphic words.

Shortly afterwards, Babar, arrived at Sayyidpur. Here the battle of Sayyidpur was fought. Babar won the battle but was so infuriated because of the resistance offered that he ordered a general massacre. The battle is described in great detail by Guru Nanak in the eleventh and twelfth *ashtapadies* of Raga Asa

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(Adi Granth pp. 417-418). He mentions the use of guns on one side and elephants on the other. Obviously, it was not an ordinary skirmish but a regular battle. But these two *ashtapadies* are memorable, not so much for the description of the battle but for three altogether different things, (1) his denunciation of the Lodi kings (2) his account of the inhuman and miserable condition of the captive women and (3) his own anguish over the sufferings he witnessed.

He condemned the Lodi kings, who, in his opinion, were like dogs, and who "wasted away a jewel of a kingdom" for the gratification of their personal desires. They regarded themselves as mighty kings but in the eyes of the Lord, they were like "insects nibbling the ear of a corn". Guru Nanak had witnessed the cruelties they had perpetrated, the forcible conversion of Hindus, the wholesale destruction of their temples and places of learning and above all their total disregard of the welfare of the masses. He writes:

A kingdom that was a jewel,
Was wasted by the dogs.
No one will mourn their passing.
.....
.....
The man who thinks himself great,
And enjoys, himself the height of his heart's desire,
In the Lord's eye is no more than an insect
Nibbling an ear of corn.

Guru Nanak describes in great detail the condition of the women who had been dishonoured and made slaves after the battle of Sayyidpur. In words charged with emotion, he describes their condition and expresses his own inability to understand the ways of the Lord.

The tresses that adorned their lovely heads,
And were parted with virmilion,
Had been shorn with cruel shears:
Dust had been thrown on their shaven heads.
They lived in ease in palaces,
Now they must beg on the road side,
Having no place for their shelter.

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Glory unto Thee, O Lord of Glory
Who can understand Thy, ways, O God?
Surely strange are Thy ways and strange Thy dispensation.

There is a flashback describing the bridal day, when they came riding in palanquins and were received by their fair bridegrooms. Guru Nanak describes the beauty of the women, the luxuries they enjoyed and the rich food that was served to them. Then came the turn of fate and their wealth and beauty that had intoxicated them, became their enemy. They were taken away from their homes forcibly and were humiliated and dishonoured. Instead of pearl necklaces, they had ropes round their necks. The Mughuls made no distinction between the Hindu, Turk and Pathan women.

But the most poignant part of these *asthapadies* is his own cry of pain and anguish at the suffering of the people—an anguish at the spiritual plane. When Guru Nanak witnessed such devastation, inequality, injustice and suffering, he cried aloud:

Thou O Creator of all things,
Takes to Thyself no blame;
Thou has sent Yama disguised as the great Mughal Babar
Terrible was the slaughter,
Loud were the cries of the lamentors.
Did this not awaken pity in Thee, O Lord?

Guru Nanak felt that he would have no cause for grievance if the battle was fought between equals but when a fierce tiger attacked helpless cattle, the Herdman alone would be called to answer for it. If a strongman attacks another, who is equally strong; where is the grief in this or whose is the grievance? It was the wholesale slaughter of the unarmed and innocent people that hurt him so deeply.

Guru Nanak ends these hymns by praising the Divine justice though often men cannot understand it. He advises Lalo to ponder deeply over the eternal principles of God, to sing His praises and be sure that He watches the world sitting above and that His judgement is True and Just.

The Janamsakhi continues the story and informs its readers that Guru Nanak and Mardana were captured and made slaves

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at Sayyidpur and Guru Nanak was made to carry a large bundle and Mardana was ordered to lead a horse. As they were being led toward the prisoners camp, it was observed that the bundle kept moving a foot above the head of Guru Nanak, and while Mardana played on his *rabab* and Guru Nanak sang his hymn, the horse followed Mardana on his own. In the prison, Guru Nanak was ordered to grind corn in a stone hand-mill but while Guru Nanak sat in a Samadhi attuned to the Lord, the mill moved automatically. When Babar was informed by Mir Khan, the local Chief, of these miracles, he came to see Guru Nanak. Seeing the man of God, he bowed before him and asked forgiveness. He ordered that Guru Nanak and Mardana be released immediately, but at the Guru's request, all the prisoners of Sayyidpur were set free and part of the plunder from that city was restored to them.

All these details may not be historically authentic but Guru Nanak, who was supremely indifferent to history, took pains to write no less than four hymns known as *Babar-Vani* about the battle of Sayyidpur and the sufferings of the inhabitants of the city. Whether Guru Nanak personally met Babar or not is unimportant but what is significant is that the invasion or to be more exact, the third incursion of Babar in 1520 when he ordered the massacre of the people of Sayyidpur, is the first contact or clash of ideologies between the two dynasties; the dynasty of Guru Nanak and that of Babar. For Babar, it was probably a minor incident, not important enough to be mentioned in his Memoirs but for Guru Nanak, these were events that caused him intense pain and anguish and resulted in the writing of four powerful hymns denouncing Babar and prophesying Hamayun's defeat at the hand of Sher Shah Suri.

The second meeting of the two dynasties took place at the time of the battle of Chittour during February, 1568. The dynasty of Guru Nanak was at that time represented by Guru Amar Das and that of Babar by Akbar.

Before we deal with that meeting, it appears necessary to fill in briefly the historical gap between the battle of Sayyidpur and the battle of Chittour. Both the dynasties produced brilliant men in their own fields and in spite of the hurdles that came in their way, they carried on the tasks assigned to them by their predecessors.

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The selection and appointment of Guru Angad as his successor by Guru Nanak was not only important, as already observed, for the continuity of the faith but also for providing a 'guru' and an indisputable leader of the newly emerging community. Sikhism lays great importance on the role of the Guru as the guide and communicator of Divine Truth. In Guru Nanak's words, "The Guru is the ladder, the dingy, the raft by means of which one reaches God ; the Guru is the lake, the ocean, the boat, the sacred place of pilgrimage, the river. If it please Thee, I am cleansed by bathing in the lake of Truth." In Raga Basant, he says :

> Without the Guru there can be no bhakti ; no love ;
> Without the Guru there is no access to the company of Saints ;
> Without the Guru one blindly engages in futile endeavour ;
> But with the Guru one is purified, the filth is purged by the Word.

The selection of the guru was based on a series of tests involving immense patience and utter devotion. There were many claiments to the guru's *gaddi* but the chief contender was Baba Sri Chand, the elder son of Guru Nanak, who was an Udasi, an ascetic, who had renounced the world. Lehna was selected not only because he accomplished the tests successfully but because Guru Nanak's religion was that of a householder and there was no place in it for asceticism and renunciation. An ascetic could not become the leader of the Sikh faith. So pleased was Guru Nanak with the devotion and humility of Lehna that he called him Angad—one who was verily a part of his body.

But Lehna was no ordinary man. From his boyhood, a spiritual restlessness kept gnawing at his heart. The eternal question, "Who am I ?" kept cropping up again and again. He wandered up and down the land, seeking a guru who would enlighten him about the meanings of life and death. He belonged to a Khatri family who worshipped goddess Durga. Every year he went to Jawalamukhi, a small town in Kangra district of Punjab, a place sacred to Durga because of the fire that issued from the mountains there. But the worship of the idols of Durga and the fire at Jawalamukhi did not appease the hunger in his heart. Then, one day, in his home town Khadur, in the early hours

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of the morning, he heard a Sikh singing the hymns of Guru Nanak. Something in the hymns touched his inner chords and awakened a symphony that filled his whole being. A strange peace came over him. Later, he went to the Sikh and enquired about the composer of these hymns. He was told about Guru Nanak, who at that time, was living at Kartarpur, a small town on the bank of river Ravi. At the very next opportunity, Lehna went to Kartarpur and in Guru Nanak, he found the Yogi he was looking for. Here, he discovered the peace and contentment he had sought all these years. He became Guru Nanak's disciple and began to live with him. With the passage of time, the Guru Nanak became deeply impressed by the spiritual quality of his disciple and it was not long before the two men felt united by the bonds of spiritutal love. Naturally, at the time of appointing his successor, he could think of no other than Lehna and called him Guru Angad. Lehna (1504-52) became Guru Angad in 1539 and pontificated for thirteen years.

Guru Angad set about the task of shepherding the new community vigorously. With his presence, he made Kartarpur ever more the centre to which Sikhs felt drawn from all parts of the Punjab. He started collecting the hymns of Guru Nanak so that they could be copied and made available to his followers. He was not too happy with the alphabet of *landas* in which the vernacular was being written because of their imperfect sounds. It is sometimes claimed that he invented the Gurmukhi alphabet but what he actually did was to improve the existing signs and introduce some variations of Devanagri script and standardise what came to be known as Gurmukhi script. In other words, the *patti* used by Guru Nanak was modified and utilised for the writing of his hymns.

It is also claimed by the writers of Janamsakhis that he collected the biographical material of Guru Nanak's life and a Janamsakhi was compiled during his time. There is, however, no historical proof for this assertion because among the Janamsakhis, the one obtained from the London library was written during Guru Hargobind's time and the rest were written after the ascension of Guru Gobind Singh. It is interesting to note that the so-called Bala's Janamsakhi though claimed to be the oldest, was written during the time of Guru Gobind Singh or even later.

But the greatest contribution of Guru Angad was to organise

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the Sikh Sangat, arrange for its daily congregation, institutionalise the singing of Kirtan at these assemblies and finally to sustain and maintain the tradition of *langar* (communal kitchen) started by Guru Nanak. These practices established the distinct identity of the community and helped in promoting the feeling of cohesion and unity among the followers of the new faith. Incidentally, the institution of langar did away with caste distinctions and thereby evoked a feeling of brotherhood among the members of the nascent community.

To the chagrin of his two sons, Datu and Dasu, Guru Angad passed on the stewardship of the community to Guru Amar Das in 1552 by nominating him as the Guru. Datu was very upset because he regarded Guru Amar Das more as an attendant of the family rather than an eminent follower who could claim the spiritual throne. He revolted and indulged in some undesirable acts but the supremacy of Guru Amar Das was accepted by the community. In the world of theocracy, the law of primogeniture has no place ; it is the spiritual depth of the individual which gains precedence.

Guru Amar Das (1479-1574) attained the stewardship at the age of seventy-three and pontificated for twenty-two years. He brought to his work the maturity and experience of a life time. His character and personality were the outcome of a long and arduous hunt for a guru and when he had found one, he set aside the worldly pursuits and devoted himself entirely to the service of his master.

His father, Tej Bhan, was a shopkeeper and he himself, for most part of his youthful years, was an itinerant trader wandering from one city to another. His parents were highly religious and, under their influence, he became a devoted worshipper of Vishnu. His work often took him to Hardwar where he met numerous sadhus and sanyasis. Though a zealous Vaishnavite, his spiritual hunger remained unappeased. He enjoyed the company of these naked and semi-naked sadhus who had renounced the world. He occasionally served them food. On one occasion, something very unexpected happened. When he brought food for a sadhu, he enquired, "Who is your guru ?"

He thought for a moment and then replied, "I hav'nt found one yet."

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"Take away this food. How can I accept food from one who has no guru."

He was taken aback, perplexed and somewhat disconcerted. For days, this strange incident kept worrying him. Well, if he had to find a guru, where else, if not in Hardwar. He met several pandits, sadhus and sanyasis and many of them were willing to adopt him as their disciple and offer him *sanyas* after the usual initiation and training period. But somehow, he could not accept what was offered and he returned home. But the fevered mind would not let him rest. He prayed hard for the gift of a guru. As though in response to his prayers, one fine morning, he heard a sweet voice singing a hymn which came like the sudden blowing of soft, cool breeze in a sun-drenched desert. He felt as though the whole burden had fallen away like a cloak and he felt free as a bird. On enquiry he learnt that the singer was no other than Bibi Amro, daughter of Guru Angad. This led him to the Guru and when he met Guru Angad, he felt instantaneously that he had found what we had been seeking. Without a moment of hesitation, he left his home and came to serve his new-found guru. The Guru blessed him and for twelve long years, he devoted all his time to *nam simran* and the service of his master. Every morning, he brought water from the Beas river for the Guru's bath and during the day, he served in the Langar. Whatever work was assigned to him, he performed it with zest and ardour. His piety and devotion won the heart of the Guru and when the Guru's end came near he appointed him as his successor.

With his rich and varied experience, Guru Amar Das set about to extend the area of his spiritual empire. Though aged, he undertook long journeys to propagate the faith. He travelled all over the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and among the Hill States in Northern India to preach and bring ever larger number of people within the folds of Sikhism. Many of the hill Chiefs became his followers and contributed handsomely to the church fund. It is said that he converted many Muslims as well. In this way, he extended considerably the area of the Sikh faith.

His business acumen helped him to organise the financial affairs of the Sikh organisation on a firm basis. He divided the whole area into twenty-two parts and called them *manjis* (dioceses) and for each area he appointed a Masand (bishop) who was to work on behalf of the central authority. He also instructed

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them to collect regular contributions from the followers and send them to the central office. This ensured a continuous supply of money for managing the various affairs of the church.

He introduced another innovation to strengthen the solidarity of his followers. He ordained that all the Sikhs should collect at Goindwal on the occasion of two festivals, Baisakhi and Diwali. On these occasions, many Sikhs brought presents for the Guru and in the collective celebration of the festivals, which included congregational meetings, Kirtan, readings from scripture, long session of singing hymns, lectures and eating together in the common kitchen, a sense of unity and togetherness was generated among the participants.

The Guru also had a Bawli (well), with eighty-four descending steps, dug up at Goindwal. The digging of the well was done by the Sangat. This Bawli became the first pilgrim spot of the Sikhs because it came to be believed that anyone who recited japji at each step followed by a bath in the Bawli would escape eighty-four lakh cycle of birth and deaths. Many men and women have since then performed this arduous feat and it is anyone's guess whether or not they crossed the sea of *samsar*.

The Guru's age and experience, his piety and spiritual aura helped him to overcome the opposition that the church faced at this juncture from the local administration, jealous pandits maulvis and the yogis. The petty officials did not approve of the expanding authortiy and influence of the Guru. The pandits, maulvis and yogis felt that the Guru was trespassing in their territories and diminishing their hold on the masses. Many complaints were lodged with the local chiefs and the provincial authority at Lahore but, with every enquiry proving them to be false, the prestige of the Guru rose higher than before.

But what really raised the prestige and stature of the Guru in the eyes of the state officials and the public was emperor Akar's visit to Goindwal. That Emperor Akbar came to see Guru Amar Das is a historical fact but there are two versions of the story. The first version, as described by Gokal Chand Narang in his *Transformation of Sikhism*, is that when in 1567, Akbar laid siege to the fort of Chittour, he found in the Mewar ruler, Udaya Singh, a strong and astute soldier and a fine leader of the Rajputs. The siege lasted for a long time as each side fought with courage and determination. Mirza Jafar Beg, the Governor of Lahore,

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who had been deeply impressed with the piety and nobility of the Guru, suggested to Akbar to make use of the great spiritual power of the Guru. Akbar was not averse to employing saints and spiritual leaders to assist him. He sent a trusted officer, Bhagwan Das Khatri of Sirhind, "to beseech the Guru to pray for his success". The Guru was busy at that time in the construction of Bawli and he said that the fort of Chittour would fall as soon as the wheel of the well is set in its proper place. Some time after the conquest of Mewar, when Akbar came to Punjab, he paid a visit to Goindwal.

The second version is that Akbar came to Lahore some time in 1568, much before the battle of Chittour. Despite all the trappings of royalty and the pomp and splendour of his court, at heart Akbar was essentially a pious and simple man, who had genuine respect for all religious people and hated morbid orthodoxy and antagonism among different faiths. He enjoyed meeting leaders of different faiths and often visited the pilgrim spots of Hindus. Having heard of the spiritual side of Guru Amar Das, he came to Goindwal to meet him.

Be that as it may, it was the second meeting of two dynasties under the most favourable stars. The two leaders met warmly, exchanged courtesies and formed deep and abiding friendship. Akbar was requested to eat along with the Sangat the simple food that was cooked in the *langar*. He graciously consented but was immensely pleased when he noticed that no distinction was made on the basis of caste, class or creed and everyone partook of the food after a brief prayer of thankfulness to the Lord. The Guru explained to Akbar the purport of Guru Nanak's mission—to propagate the unity of Godhead and the brotherhood of man. When deeper spiritual aspects of Sikhism were discussed, the Guru further explained that in Sikhism the main stress was laid on honest hard work, ethical living and *nam-simran*, which led to the merging of the finite in the Infinite. Akbar, who occasionally felt the stirring of the soul within and was troubled by the eternal questions of life and death was delighted with the exposition of the new faith. When leaving, Akbar asked the Guru if there was anything he could offer him. The Guru replied that he was a fakir and had no need of worldly possessions. Akbar, however, bestowed a few villages around Amritsar on Bibi Bhani, daughter of Guru Amar Das.

This was the high tide mark of the story of the two dynasties

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where two akin spirits met and understood and appreciated the role each one was called upon to play. But before this happy meeting, Babar's dynasty found itself in doldrums buffeted by the winds of fortune. Though Babar had carved out a large empire for himself, yet he died soon thereafter and had no time to consolidate and organise it. His son, Humayun, who succeeded him, lacked the qualities needed by a king to gain or retain a kingdom in a fragmented India, ruled by bitter rivals during the medieval times. Though in his private life, he was a cultured, amiable and friendly person, he did not have the determination to fight a battle to the bitter end and he was also wanting in political wisdom and diplomatic skill. Moreover, in the bitter struggle between the Turks and Afghans for gaining supremacy in India, he was opposed by Sher Shah, a military genius and a great administrator. Beginning life in the service of various Afghan rulers of different principalities in India, through sheer political skill and indomitable courage, he became the ruler of a large part of Bihar and Bengal. His real name was Farid but he came to be called Sher Khan when he single-handed killed a tiger. He defeated Humayun at Chausa in 1539 and at Kanauj in 1540 and wiped away the empire of Babar and sent Humayun wandering for fifteen years. Having humbled the ruler of Delhi, he pressed home his advantages and defeated the Rajputs of Malwa and Raisina in Central India. With his usual vigour and promptitude, he subjugated Multan, Sind and Punjab, in the next two years and thus became the undisputed ruler of the whole of Northern India. But his end was as sudden as his meteoric rise; at the battle of Kalinjar he was killed by an accidental explosion of gunpowder on 22 May, 1545.

Though Sher Shah ruled only for five years, he is remembered in history both as a great soldier and an unparalled administrator. His administrative set-up, his reforms in revenue system, his system of communication and espionage, his sense of justice and fairplay his attitude towards non-Muslims and freedom from bigotry made him one of the greatest personalities of his age.

Sher Shah could easily be described as a flash in the pan of history but he was certainly a meteor that flashed across the sky and through the intensity of its brightness left a lasting memory in the hearts of men. His death was followed by anarchy that made possible the return of Humayun.

Humayun's reign was brief. Through the generous help of the

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Shah of Iran, Humayun returned to India, conquered Lahore in 1555 and soon after defeated Sikandar Sur in a battle near Sirhind and occupied Delhi and Agra. But he did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his victory. On 24 January 1556 he died of an accidental fall from the stairs of his library.

Akbar, who was only thirteen years old, was proclaimed the king. It was not Akbar, but his guardian, Bairam Khan, who won the second battle of Panipat in 1556 against Hemu, a general of Adil Shah Sur, and once for all established the supremacy of Mughal rule in India. We must, however, reflect for a moment on the inscrutable way of the working of fate. Bairam won an empire for Akbar but he was banished from the land with orders to retire to Mecca. On the way to Mecca, he was murdered by an Afghan in Gujarat. And, Hemu, is like a character from fiction. A most extraordinary man, who started life as a shopkeeper and through sheer brilliance, won his way to become the Prime Minister of Adil Shah Sur, he came to be known as a great general and a fine administrator. For Adil Shah Sur, he won many battles and added whole provinces to his territory. In the battle of Panipat, his eyes were pierced by an odd arrow; he became unconscious; the battle was lost; he was captured and put to the sword.

We must now turn to Akbar, not because he was Akbar the Great and the noblest and greatest Emperor India had seen after Ashoka but because of a special trait of his character that brought him to Goindwal to the very door of Guru Amar Das. No doubt Akbar was a confirmed imperialist and fought all his life to extend the boundaries of his empire. He was a monarch who enjoyed all the good things of the world, wealth, wine, women and war. Though illiterate, he was a highly cultured man, with a rich and sophisticated mind and an extraordinary memory. He had books on philosophy and theology read to him. Catholic in taste and liberal in his ideas, he was loved and admired by his subjects. Dauntless in war and generous in peace, he was a genius in many ways, particularly in the field of administration. He built a great empire and during his time was the mightiest and richest man in the world.

But what we are concerned with are the two aspects of his personality; his attitude towards the Hindus and his religion, the so-called Din-i-Ilahi. Before and after Akbar, most of the Muslim rulers followed the policy of persecuting the Hindus,

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Generally speaking, they were dogmatist and fanatically believed in spreading Islam by all means, including the use of sword. But Akbar had a liberal bent of mind and had undergone influences which made him intensely dislike orthodoxy and fanaticism. The most potent influence that Akbar underwent was that of the Sufis, both in Afghanistan and India. Sufism is Islamic mysticism. The Sufis believed that mystical speculation and experience were essential for spiritual enlightenment. The Sufis did not disown Islam but they found little comfort in the orthodoxy and formalistic study of Quran and Hadith with their stress on prayers, fasts and pilgrimage. They yearned for the mystical, the supernatural. Theirs was the quest of the inner spirit that longed for the merging of the finite with the Infinite. No doubt Sufism was deeply embedded in Shariat (the Islamic laws) but from Shariat they wanted to move on to Tariqat (the path) and further to Marifat (the spiritual knowledge) and finally to Haqiqat (union with God or God-consciousness). Akbar imbibed these ideas mostly because of his close friendship with Sheikh Mubarak and his two sons, Abu Fazl and Faizi.

Akbar was also influenced by his three Rajput wives who were permitted to openly worship their idols in the palace. Moreover Akbar came in touch with the leader of Bhakti movement which was widely prevalent during his time. His inquisitive mind tried to understand the underlying unity of different religions. His close association with Hindu religion because of his wives and their relations gave him a glimpse of the richness and depth of the Hindu faith.

All these interests made him tolerant towards other religions. He hated communal animosity and religious feuds. Following a policy of conciliation towards Hindus, he abolished *Jizya* and pilgrimage tax. He also stopped the forcible conversion of Hindus. And above all, he permitted the recruitment of Hindus to all state service on the basis of merit. Men like Todar Mal, Man Singh, Bhagwan Das and Rai Singh occupied some of the highest positions in his court. All this goes to indicate Akbar's mature vision and statesmanship.

With the passage of time, Akbar's interest in religion became deeper and with the help of Abu Fazl, he began to study the tenets of different religions. He specially constructed a building and called it Ibadat Khana (house of worship) where he invited the leading lights of Islam, Hinduism. Buddhism, Christianity and

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Zoroastrianism to discuss their religions with him. He tended towards eclecticism, borrowing the best from all religions and on that basis formulating a religion of his own. On this basis, he proclaimed the establishment of Din-i-Ilahi, which would be acceptable to Hindus and Muslims and declared himself as the Prophet of the new religion. Abu Fazl helped him concoct all kinds of ceremonies connected with religion. But the fact remains that Din-i-Ilahi was no Din (religion) because it had no church, no sacred scripture and no priests and Ibadat-Khana was no place of worship; the former was an attempt to deify the emperor and the latter was a place for debates or discussions. Din-i-Ilahi did not attract many followers except the sycophants and hangers-on and died a natural death and was buried with Akbar. But underlying all this was Akbar's yearning for truth, and his inner urge for the trancendental. This prompted Akbar to visit religious centres of various faiths and meet their religious leaders. It was the unappeased hunger of his soul and the search for inner peace that brought him to Goindwal and resulted in a happy meeting between the two dynasties.

Guru Amar Das succeeded by his son-in-law Guru Ram Das (1534-81), the great grandfather of Tegh Bahadur. We have already discussed the significant part he played in strengthening the socio-economic position of the Sikh community. Politically, he maintained cordial relations with Emperor Akbar and the two dynasties, continued to expand their respective areas of influence without any clash or conflict. Guru Ram Das was succeeded by his son, Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606), the grandfather of Tegh Bahadur. We have already given a thumb-nail sketch of his life with a view to providing some idea of the greatness of the Guru and the monumental work he did for the Sikh religion. Most of the period of the pontification of Guru Arjun Dev coincided with the regime of Emperor Akbar; Guru Arjun Dev was martyred in 1606 and Akbar died in 1605. Akbar's liberal policy toward non-Muslims permitted Guru Arjun Dev full freedom to play his significant role in the consolidation and expansion of the Sikh faith. Guru Arjun Dev and Akbar had great respect for each other and in 1598 when Akbar came to Goindwal to meet the Guru, he expressed his appreciation of the simplicity and nobility of the Sikh faith and the work that was being done to free the people from the bondage of casteism and religious prejudices.

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It was some time later that Akbar sent for Guru Arjun Dev when a large number of ill-founded reports were sent to him that the Guru had compiled the *Adi granth* in which both Islam and Hinduism had been denigrated. Guru Arjun Dev sent Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas to Agra, along with a copy of the Granth, to present the true facts before the Emperor. Akbar listened to the statements of both the parties and dismissed the case after praising the *Adi granth* as a sacred book deserving respect from men of all faiths. With the death of Akbar in 1605 ended the era of religious peace and the age of conflict between the two dynasties commenced.

Within a year of Akbar's death occurred a momentous event that alienated and embittered the relationship of the two dynasties for all times to come. Under the orders of Jahangir (1569-1627), who succeeded Akbar and was crowned on 3 November 1605, Guru Arjun Dev was tortured to death in June, 1606. It was a most heinous crime against man and God and can be attributed only to the motiveless malignity of Jahangir. Not only because the martydom of Guru Arjun Dev is an event of great significance but also because historians have given different versions of the causes which led to the martyrdom, that it needs to be studied in some detail.

Generally, the first cause assigned to the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev is the enmity and intrigues of his elder brother Prithvi Chand. Prithia, as he is commonly remembered, was the eldest son of Guru Ram Das and he naturally assumed that he would inherit the Guruship after his father. But Guru Ram Das, like all fathers, was quietly assessing the character and capabilities of his three sons, Prithi Chand, Mahadev and Arjun Dev. Prithi, he noticed, was extremely greedy and avaricious and sought to collect wealth by all fair and foul means. Mahadev was lazy and indifferent. Arjun Dev was obedient, intelligent, upright and devoted to the service of the community. He was also deeply attached to his father. These traits of character of the three sons were further highlighted when Guru Ram Das was invited to attend a marriage in Lahore. As the Guru was unable to accept the invitation because of certain engagements at home, he asked Prithi to go to Lahore. Prithia was afraid that in his absence all the offerings of Sangat and the gifts that Masands brought would be taken over by someone else and also as the time for nominating the successor

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of the Guru was approaching near, he could not risk being away from Amritsar. Mahadev was indifferent and excused himself on the plea that he was not interested in attending marriages. Arjun Dev, however, readily accepted the suggestion and proceeded to Lahore. He was also advised to stay on in Lahore after the marriage and look after the affairs of the Sangat there. Feeling pangs of separation at Lahore, Arjun Dev addressed three letters to his father, two of which were intercepted by Prithia but the third reached the father. In the third letter Arjun Dev had mentioned the despatch of two earlier letters. The three letters, written in metrical composition, expressed in words of extreme delicacy and charm, the love of the son for his father, the pangs he suffered because of the separation and the ultimate bliss he hoped for when reunited. The Guru discovered the two earlier letters in Prithia's room. The Guru was deeply touched and sent for Arjun Dev and having made up his mind, performed the simple initiation ceremony and nominated him as the future Guru. Prithia was furious and refused to accept the decision of his father. He became such a nuisance that ultimately he was turned out of the house and was called a Mina, which means deceitful or despicable.

All his life Prithia intrigued against Guru Arjun Dev and conspired with Mughal officers and even approached Emperor Akbar to dethrone the Guru. But Akbar was so impressed by the saintliness of Guru Arjun Dev that he refused to interfere and dismissed the petition of Prithia.

Prithia set himself up as a Guru at a village called Hoer, some fifteen miles from Lahore and built a Gurdwara and had a tank dug up there. This was done to counteract the popularity of Harimandir at Amritsar but he failed to attract the Sangat there. He was deeply frustrated and his only hope was that since Guru Arjun Dev had no son, his own son, Maharban, would succeed the Guru. But this hope, too, was dashed when Hargobind was born. So deep was his jealousy and hatred that he set about to plan the murder of the new born child. He bribed an old family nurse to poison Hargobind. He also sent a snake charmer to have the child bitten by a cobra. But, as God would have it, both of them failed in their missions. By these activities, Prithia was completely discredited in the eyes of the Sikh community and for some time, he ceased to interfere in Guru's affairs.

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The second person considered responsible for the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev was Chandu Shah, the imperial Diwan at Lahore. Obviously, he was a very powerful and influential person and thought no end of himself. At one stage, he was looking for a match for his young daughter. As was customary in those days, he called a Prohit and asked him to look around for a suitable young man. It so happened that in his search, the Prohit came across young Hargobind and was impressed by his youth, grace and elegance. He reported to Chandu Shah that he had found a fine son-in-law for him. Chandu Shah was not altogether pleased, because socially he considered the status of his family much higher than that of the Guru. But for some superstitious reasons, he asked the Prohit to go ahead and approach Guru Arjun Dev. But when the Guru learnt about the hauteur and arrogance of the Diwan, he rejected the offer. Chandu felt deeply insulted and became a bitter enemy of the Guru. He was, however, a shrewd courtier and, though he used every opportunity to poison the mind of the Emperor against the Guru, he waited for the proper opportunity to put into action his evil designs.

Lastly, the most important person in this tragic story of the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev was Emperor Jahangir because, in the final analysis, it was he who ordered the execution of the Guru.

Like all the Timurites, Jahangir was a cultured prince, a man of considerable literary attainments, a patron of fine arts and a lover of nature. He embellished his court with men of learning and distinction. He was a man of refined tastes and was himself a painter. Speaking broadly, he was just and compassionate, and the fact that he had a Chain of Justice fixed outside the fort of Agra and permitted all his subjects to shake it and ring its sixty bells so that they could present their grievance before the Emperor personally, speak of his sense of justice and love of his people. He was not a great general like Babar or an outstanding administrator like Akbar, but he was a fairly successful and benevolent ruler and was popular among his subjects. He had, however, three weaknesses; he was an extremist, he was given to excessive drinking and he permitted himself to be completely dominated by Nur Jehan. As an extremist, he either loved passionately or hated fiercely; he was either a kind friend or a bitter enemy; he could be gentle to animals and watch men being flayed alive. He was an impatient

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man and made the last years of Akbar's life miserable. He rebelled against hi father and set himself as Emperor at Allahabad, but Akbar did not take any action against him. He only admonished and advised him to mend his ways. But when Jahangir's son, Khusrav, rebelled against him, he pursued him with a large army and captured Khusrav and his two followers, Hussain Beg and Abdul Aziz. Khusrav was brought before the Emperor in chains. He was half blinded, imprisoned for ten years and finally executed. The treatment of his two followers can best be described in Jahangir's own words. "I ordered that these two villains to be enclosed in the skins of a cow and an ass and be placed on asses faced to the tail and so be paraded in the city." This harsh treatment betrays a strong streak of cruelty in the character of Jahangir. Secondly, when in his cups, he forgot the world and acted like a Bohemian. His excessive use of wine and opium made him temperamental and this led to all kinds of cruel and brutal acts. Finally, the dominance of Nur Jehan incapacitated him for work. He himself admitted that "I have sold my kingdom to my beloved queen for a cup of wine and a dish of soup." No doubt Nur Jehan was a most remarkable woman endowed with many natural gifts, such as intel'igence, courage, administrative and diplomatic skill and refined taste for all the good things of life. But this suzerainty of the pettycoat turned Jahangir into a lotus eater, who abandoned himself to the pleasures of wine and woman forgetting the duties of his office. This naturally led to court intrigues and counter-intrigues and finally to the revolt of Shah Jahan. It was also responsible for the loss of Kandhar and Jahangir's hold on Ahmednagar. Excessive drinking, in the final analysis, was the main cause of Jahangir's death.

But what we are concerned with is Jahangir's religious policy. Though a devout Muslim, he was intolerant towards other religions. It was in the reign of Jahangir that religious persecution started. Under his orders the temples at Kangra and Pushkar in Ajmer were desecrated. So far as the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev is concerned, Jahangir implicated the Guru in Khusrav's rebellion. Soon after Jahangir's accession, his eldest son, Khusrav, revolted and joined with some nobles marched towards Lahore. On his way to Lahore, Khusrav passed through Taran Taran and sought the blessings of Guru Arjun Dev. Out of the kindness of his

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heart and as befitting a saintly person, he received him courteously and bestowed his blessings on the fugitive prince. Some historians claim that the Guru also gave Khusrav five thousand rupees when the prince asked for pecuniary assistance. Be that as it may, the Guru's actions were not in any way directed against Jahangir; he would have helped anyone who knocked at his door and asked for assistance.

But Jahangir was not the man to forget and leave unpunished all those who had helped Khusrav in his rebellion. Jahangir twisted the simple act of courtesy shown by the Guru to Khusrav into an act of treason and imposed a fine of two lakhs on the Guru. When the Guru refused to pay the fine, he ordered that the Guru should be arrested and tortured to death.

But let us be quite clear about one thing that the Guru's execution was not a "penalty for high treason and contumacy" as some historians make out but it was the bigotry and narrow-mindedness of Jahangir that was responsible for this dastardly act. Jahangir could not tolerate the rising fame and expanding influence of the leader of a new faith. Long before Jahangir ascended the throne he had made up his mind to destroy the Guru as is evident from a passage from his Memoirs. "At Goindwal, situated on the river Beas, there lived a Hindu Arjan in the garb of saints and holy men. He had attracted many Hindus and even some ignorant and low class Musalmans and had ensnared them to follow the practice of his cult. He had been loudly blowing the trumpet of his saintliness and spiritual leadership. He was known as 'Guru' and people from all sides resorted to him and made declarations of faith in him. This 'shop' of his had been running briskly since three or four generations. I had been wishing for a long time either to abolish this emporium of falsehood or convert him to Islam till Khusrav happened to pass this way. The foolish prince thought of attaching himself to his cortege. He repaired to the Guru's residence and had an interview with him. The Guru discussed some old cases with him and with his finger put on the forehead of the prince a Saffron mark which is called 'tilak' by the Hindus and is considered an auspicious omen. This incident was reported to me. I ordered him to be arrested and made over his household and family to Murtaza Khan. I confiscated all his property and issued orders that he should be imprisoned, tortured and executed."

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This admission on the part of Jahangir leaves not a shadow of doubt that it was Jahangir's bigotry and malice that was responsible for the death of Guru Arjun Dev. Prithia and Chandhu Shah played their humble part. Prithia all along kept sending reports to Jahangir against the Guru through various imperial officials at Lahore. Chandhu Shah used every opportunity to denounce the Guru. It is also claimed that Prithia organised the inhuman tortures of Guru Arjun Dev, which resulted in his death.

With the martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev, the first phase of the story of two dynasties came to an end. The age of peaceful co-existence ended; the era of armed struggle began. The martyrdom changed the very character of the Sikhs, they felt the need to arm themselves to protect their religion. For long it was an unequal fight, they were in no position to challenge the mighty Mughal empire. But under the surface slow fire began to burn; it kept smouldering for a whole century until it became a mighty flame and burst forth to destroy the Mughals and banish them from the land. May be it needed another martyrdom, that of Guru Tegh Bahadur, to turn the people's resentment into the war of retribution.

The two leaders, Jahangir and Guru Arjun Dev, left behind them altogether different types of images for their followers. For the people, Jahangir was an autocratic and despotic prince, moody and temperamental, given to bouts of generosity and maliciousness addicted to wine and opium, very much under the thumb of his wife and mostly neglectful of the affairs of the State. Guru Arjun Dev to his followers was the twilight hour when the spirit soars to regions beyond the universe, the pool of neetar, the sacred scripture, the eternal quest for the Infinite, the Psalm of Peace, the sparkling sunlight over flowing waters and balm for all the ills human flesh is heir to.

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3

March of Events

By the time Tegh Bahadur was born (1621), Guru Hargobind had come to some kind of understanding with Emperor Jahangir. Thereafter there was a whole decade of peaceful co-existence. But earlier the Guru had passed through the most critical years of his life. He was only eleven years old when he was anointed as the Guru; the whole burden of carrying on the mission of his father fell on his young shoulders. He was fortunate in having Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas as his advisers because they were men of experience and their loyalty and devotion could not be questioned. The Guru had put on two swords, one of *miri* (temporal authority) and the other of Piri (spiritual authority) because of the last message Guru Arjun Dev had sent from the prison in which he had advised that he "should sit fully armed on the throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability." But the donning of the two swords was not a mere symbolic gesture; it signified the pursuance of certain policies. The Guru was expected to carry on the spiritual mission of his predecessor, and, at the same time, he had to transform a peace-loving religious community into a martial organisation. It was indeed a difficult task but he had to take the initial steps and, as it were, set the ball rolling. It took a long time to turn the Sikhs into a community of the Khalsa (the pure ones); it required the baptism of sword by Guru Gobind Singh to perform the miracle and the metamorphosis. And, in between, the price of another martyrdom had to be paid to bring about the transformation. It was only then that the tenth Guru could claim that he would make the sparrows hunt the hawks and single individuals to challenge legions. But all that

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Guru Hargobind could do immediately after his investiture was to begin thinking seriously about raising an army of his own.

But, at that moment, he was undergoing a period of terrible agony and gnawing grief. Reports about the tortures inflicted on Guru Arjun Dev were being received daily from Lahore and one can well imagine the despair and desolation of the young Guru. There was no one to turn to for solace; the whole family was benumbed with grief. Like others, he turned to prayer and the resources of his inner faith. When the final news about the ascension of his father came, he sat without a word, deep in his own thought trying to comprehend the meaning and purpose of this martyrdom. He accepted it as the Will of the Almighty and set about his task with greater determination than ever-before. But there was another Sword of Democles hanging over-head. Jahangir had not only ordered the imprisonment, torture and execution of Guru Arjun Dev but he had also decreed that the Guru's "household and family be made over to Murtza Khan ...and his property confiscated." If this part of the decree had been carried out, it would have meant the complete annihilation of the family. But the God above has His own way of protecting His devotees and the divine intervention came in the person of Mian Mir.

Mir Muin-ul-Islam, commonly known as Mian Mir, was born in Sistan in 1531 and lived for over a hundred years. During his early years, he had his religious education in Sistan under the guidance of Khawaja Khizer. At that time, Persia was passing through internal turmoil and endless family feuds among the war-lords with the result that many of its intellectuals were attracted to India to escape the uncertainty of life in their homeland. Among the many Ulemas and Sufis who came to India was Mian Mir, who settled in Lahore and became the disciple of Maulana Sayyad Allah and Maulana Niamat Allah belonging to the Qadiriya *Silsilah* of the Sufis. He underwent the spiritual training of the Sufis involving penance, fasts and physical tortures. He willingly performed all the rigorous mystical exercises prescribed by his preceptors. Soon he gained the reputation of a great ascetic, who had renounced the world and spent all his time in prayer and meditation. It was claimed that through the intensity of spiritual quest, he had finally attained union (Wasl), with God which was

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the ultimate goal of all the Sufis. Whatever was the state of his spiritual attainment, it is evident that he was a God-illuminated soul who had drunk deep at the fountain of Divine love. His reputation spread far and wide and people from all walks of life flocked at the door of his *Khangah*. Akbar, Jahangir, Nur Jehan, Shah Jahan and Dara Shikoh were among his *murshids*. It may, however, be added that though he exercised a powerful pietistic influence over the Muslim society of his age and was held in great esteem by the highest in the land, he wanted to keep himself away from the members of the royal family and all other rich and influential people. He was a true ascetic and never accepted gifts from the princes or rich nobles. Whatever was offered at his *Khangah*, he distributed it among the poor. Once when Jahangir gave him a rosary of dry dates, he passed it on to Dara Shikoh. At another time, Jahangir sent for him. After the long interview, when Jahangir asked him if there was any wish that he could grant, Mian Mir replied, "Yes, there is one, if your Highness would grant it." "What can that be?" enquired the Emperor. With a calm but firm voice, Mian Mir replied, "I have only one wish that in future the Emperor should not take the trouble to send for me."

A great friendship had flowered between Guru Arjun Dev and Mian Mir under unusual circumstances. It so happened that some time in the eighties of the sixteenth century, a virulent epidemic of plague spread all over Lahore and people died in hundreds. The city was full of dead bodies and, in panic, the citizens ran away from their houses. The sick lay dying unattended. When the Guru learnt of this calamity, he came to Lahore to set up his camp outside the city. He, along with his followers, set about distributing food and medicines and disposing of the dead bodies. When Mian Mir learnt about the zeal and selfless devotion of the Guru's followers he came to see the Guru. It was a meeting of two great saints, two akin souls involved in the same quest. Though their paths were different, their goal was the same. Indeed, even the paths merged at several places and became indistinguishable. No formalities were required to introduce them. As they held each other's hands, they felt the spiritual bonds that bound them together. It was followed by frequent meetings and exchange of thoughts on mystical questions. In 1589, when Guru Arjun Dev began the building of Harimandir he regarded it as a great honour that

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Mian Mir had accepted his invitation to lay the foundation stone of the temple. Mian Mir, on his part, thought that it was a noble gesture on the part of the Guru and a unique moment in his own life. Such was the depth of feelings between the two fakirs.

When Jahangir decreed the execution of Guru Arjun Dev Mian Mir was deeply distressed and tried his best to dissuade the Emperor from committing such a dastardly act. But Jahangir had made up his mind much earlier and was eager to present himself as the champion of Islam. Drunk with the newly acquired power of an Emperor, he thought that the execution of the Guru and the destruction of a fast expanding new faith in the very first year of his reign, would win him the esteem and following of all the orthodox Muslims in India and abroad. He, therefore, refused to accept the advice of Mian Mir. The Sikh chroniclers describe in some detail the meeting of Mian Mir and Guru Arjun Dev in the prison where the Guru was being tortured. So shocked was Mian Mir at what he witnessed, that he told the Guru that if the Guru would permit him, he would, with his mystical powers, destroy Lahore and Delhi. But the Guru would not agree to such a misuse of spiritual powers. He told Mian Mir that the will of God had to be accepted unquestionably because there were hidden meanings in every act of God. Probably his own execution had a definite purpose in the scheme of things He had ordained. In the face of such faith, Mian Mir had no answer; he bowed and departed.

The intervention of Mian Mir had, however, this effect that Jahangir forbade the confiscation of the Guru's property and the handing over of Guru's family to Murtza Khan.

For a few years Guru Hargobind remained unmolested by the Mughal authorities. He, along with his leading Sikhs, set about strengthening the organisational set-up of the community and recruiting men for his army. A small detachment of horsemen was trained to act as the bodyguard of the Guru. The Akal Takhat was constructed right opposite Harimandir and Guru Hargobind issued his *firmans* and held his court on its raised platform. All these activities were being reported to Jahangir by his secret police. Jahangir could not stomach the Guru's wearing two swords, acting like a prince with an armed escort as his bodyguard and holding court and issuing *firmans* from a high platform resembling a throne. He also did not like the Guru

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being addressed at *Sacha Padshah* (the true king). He was of the view that all these privileges were strictly reserved for the Mughals and any encroachment on them was a challenge to the imperial authority. He ordered the imprisonment of the Guru in the Gwalior fort but the reason he mentioned in his decree was that the fine of two lakhs which was imposed on Guru Arjun Dev had not been paid by his son, Guru Hargobind.

How long the Guru remained imprisoned in the Gwalior fort is a moot point. Mohsin Fani, a contemporary historian, states that the duration of Guru's imprisonment was twelve years. This was proved to be wrong by many historians when they took into account the birth of the Guru's children and various other events of his life. Some of the Sikh historians have reduced the period of imprisonment to forty days only. Recent researches, however, indicate that the Guru remained in the Gwalior fort for three or four years.

During Hargobind's absence, the administrative duties and organisational work of the Panth was taken over by Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas. Bhai Buddha, even though he was at that time over a hundred years old, would not rest in peace and worked out a strategem. To keep alive the memory of the Guru and maintain the sanctity of his person, he organised groups of men who went from one village to the next singing hymns and in one way or another expressed their devotion to the Guru. The next village, in turn, organised its own group and, in the same manner, carried on the good work. Sometimes the groups carried burning torches at night and left them at the next village with instructions to pass them on further ahead. In this way, some groups reached Gwalior. Since they could not see, much less meet the Guru, they went round the Gwalior fort, offered their prayers and returned home. In this way, one or two groups could be seen almost every day going round the Gwalior fort. Reports about the circumambulation of these groups reached Jahangir, who could not but be impressed by the loyalty and devotion of the Guru's followers. He was essentially a superstitious man and the thought that he had imprisoned a saint or a holy person began to worry him. At this opportune moment, Mian Mir came all the way from Lahore to Agra to persuade the Emperor to release the Guru. Mian Mir was helped by Nur Jehan and Wazir Khan. Nur Jehan, though the most beautiful and most powerful queen of the Mughal

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Empire, had also tasted hard times and prayed and fasted for the Divine assistance. She was the daughter of Mirza Ghiyas Beg who came to seek his fortune in India. She was married to Ali Quli Beg Istaglu, who, too, was some sort of an adventurer. He was given a small Jagir in Bengal and came to be known as Sher Afghan. Within a few years, he was killed and she became a widow. After five long years of widowhood, she was married to Jahangir, who first called her Nur Mahal (Light of the palace) and later changed it to Nur Jehan (Light of the world). She was a dominating woman and exercised great influence on Jahangir. She hated the power enjoyed by the ecclesiastical courts and much more so the tortures and cruelties they inflicted in the name of religion. Most of all, she disliked the ill-treatment of saints, sadhus and other holy persons. She was not averse to using her feminine charm to get the release of such persons from the Mughal prisons. She helped Mian Mir to obtain the release of Guru Hargobind from the Gwalior fort.

A word or two may be said about Wazir Khan because he played an important role in Sikh history and came to the assistance of Guru Hargobind many times, particularly after he became Governor of Punjab in 1628. His real name was Ilim-ud-din Ansari. He was a hakim by profession. He belonged to Chinot. He set up his practice in Agra and, in a short time, gained such reputation that he was employed by Prince Khurram (later known as Shah Jahan) and, in fact, became the official physician of Jahangir's family. He was a highly learned and cultured man. Moreover, he had profound faith in God. He believed that without God's grace no hakim could cure his patients. His religious bent of mind helped him to become popular among the people. He was no dogmatist; his scholarship and liberal outlook helped him to appreciate the approach of other religions. He intensely disliked religious fanatics, who through their overenthusiasm made people hate religion. Whenever, he passed through Amritsar, he visited the Sikh temple. In the course of time, he came to appreciate the simplicity of Sikh faith, its belief in the unity of God, its rejection of idols and images, its emphasis on the equality of man and particularly the spirit of service which was manifest in the way the temple was being built and the *langar* was being run by the joint efforts of the whole community. He met Guru

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Hargobind many times and a warm friendship grew between the two men.

Hikim Wazir Khan gained the favour of both Jahangir and Shah Jehan and was appointed at first as a Diwan, later as Governor of Punjab and finally acted for a short time as Subedar of Agra. His powerful influence at the court was of great value to the Sikhs. He, in his own quiet way, assisted Mian Mir in the release of Guru Hargobind.

When Guru Hargobind returned from Gwalior, he took up the threads of his earlier life and re-established his personal contact with Sangats at different places and made arrangements for the propagation of the faith in distant parts of India. He travelled a great deal and at each missionary centre, he addressed the audience in his own dignified, manly way. He asked for two things ; powerful weapons and brave men. He awakened their dormant sensibilities and challenged their manhood. He sought to banish fear and destroy the myth of the invincibility of Pathans and Turks. He made them trust God and have faith in themselves. He distributed books of prayer but when he was particularly pleased with someone, he presented him a broad sword or a battle-axe and the meaning of the two things was not lost on the recipients. And there was no dearth of brave, fighting men in Malva and Magha and they were too pleased to find a spirited Guru who was both a saint and a soldier. Since he carried his whole family with him, travelling was done in a leisurely fashion and every opportunity was used to propagate the faith and win new adherents to the community. Tegh Bahadur was a young lad at that time and thoroughly enjoyed these long tours in the company of his sister. It was indeed an exciting time for him His father and the leading Sikhs rode on horses, the ladies of the family and the children travelled in carriages and tents and household effects were carried on bullock carts. Men, fully armed, walked on foot, guarding the whole entourage. Travelling was mostly undertaken during the winter season with its bright sunny days and sharp, cold nights. It was the most invigorating time of the year infusing the young with a spirit of adventure. For Tegh Bahadur and his brothers, it was sheer joy to be travelling among the open fields with their green and golden crops. Every evening tents were pitched, torches were lighted, cooking was done on open hearths and the atmosphere

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was filled with the appetising fragrance of food, the excited laughter of children and the quiet, soft murmur of women's talk. Whenever the party reached any important village, town or city, receptions were arranged and crowds collected to have *darshan* of the Guru who had recently come out of the Gwalior fort. *Darshan* is a word which cannot be easily translated in English because it means something more than meeting or seeing. It has connotations of sanctity, benediction, grace and reverence put together. The Guru addressed the gatherings, showered his blessings and, wherever possible, helped the people to solve their local problems or overcome their difficulties. Tegh Bahadur and his brothers were particularly excited when the party visited places like Kartarpur, Khadur, Goindwal and Taran Taran. Each of these places was associated with the earlier Gurus and proved of great interest and education for the children. Kartarpur was associated with Guru Nanak, Khadur with Guru Angad, Goindwal with Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das and Taran Taran with Guru Arjun Dev. Each place had its own flavour, its distinct background and folklore and most of all the visible imprints of each Guru. At each place, they met near and distant relatives and learnt much of the family tradition. And finally when they returned to Amritsar, they could not but be reminded about its association with Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjun Dev. Moreover, Amritsar was the spiritual centre of Sikh faith and with its Harimandir and Akal Takht, it stood out as the living embodiment of Sikhism. It was, at the same time, a shrine of meditation to which men came with sorrow-laden hearts and through the alchemy of its spiritual atmosphere, had their burdens lightened. It was also the birth place of Tegh Bahadur and every time he returned to the sacred city and the familiar surrounding, he felt at peace with himself and the world.

During these years, both of his elder brothers, Gurditta and Suraj Mal were married and Gurditta had a son, named Dhirmal. He himself was engaged to Gujri, daughter of Lal Chand, a Khatri of Lakhnaur, near Ambala.

In the meantime, Jahangir died on 7 November 1627, near Bhimbar on his way to Lahore from Kashmir. He was buried in the Shahdara Garden near Lahore where his widowed queen, Nur Jehan, built a beautiful mausoleum. The death of

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Jahangir led to a battle of succession in the true Mughal style. Intrigues and counter-intrigues were set in motion and there was a scramble for power. The question of accepting the lawful heir to the throne just did not arise; the sword was the final arbiter. Jahangir had four sons Khusrav, Khurram (later known as Shah Jahan), Shahryar and Parwez. Khusrav, as we know, rebelled against his father and was hunted down by the imperial forces and was finally executed. Parwez had already died. So the contest for the throne was between Shahryar and Shah Jahan. Shahryar was the son-in-law of Nur Jahen and Shah Jahan was the son-in-law of Asaf Khan, elder brother of Nur Jahan. When Jahangir died, Nur Jehan sent for Shahryar from Agra to Lahore and proclaimed him as the Emperor. In the meantime, Asaf Khan sent for Shah Jahan, who was in the South and advised him to reach Agra as fast as he could. Nur Jahan wanted to imprison his brother and, therefore, invited him to come to Lahore. Asaf Khan was an astute politician and saw through the game. He proclaimed Dawar Baksh, son of Prince Khusrav, as the king as a stop-gap arrangement and collecting a large army, proceeded to Lahore and gave battle to Shahryar. Shahryar was defeated, captured and blinded. Shah Jahan reached Agra in February, 1628, and was proclaimed as the Emperor. Shah Jahan ordered that all the royal princes including Dawar Bakhsh should be put to death. Asaf Khan carried out the order with great alacrity and promptness. Nur Jehan was given a pension and spent the remaining years of her life in Lahore until she died in 1645.

Shah Jahan was a gifted prince. He was a great favourite of his grandfather, Akbar, who planned his education and trained him to uphold the tradition of the Mughal family. As a young prince, his intellectual brilliance and martial qualities marked him as the future emperor. He was deputed to undertake important expeditions which he completed successfully and earned for himself great fame as a military leader. As the Governor of Dakhin, he won a diplomatic victory over Malik Ambar when he managed the surrender of Ahmednagar. He was a wise statesmen and a brilliant administrator. His reign is remembered as the Golden Age in the medieval history of India. There were two aspects of his personality. On the one hand, he was a learned and accomplished prince deeply interested in the welfare

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of his people. He was a great patron of arts such as literature, music, painting and particularly architecture. He had a magnificent court adorned by men of learning, both Muslims and Hindus. He bestowed many gifts on scholars of Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit. He paid a great deal of attention to the development of music and painting in his time and patronised the great masters in these arts. It is, however, in the field of architecture that he reigns supreme. Whereas his predecessors built massive mosques, forts and mausoleums in red stone, he turned to marble and all his buildings are marked by the delicacy of design and architectural excellence. Many of these buildings were embedded with precious stones. The apex of Mughal architecture is represented by Jama Masjid, Moti Masjid, Diwan-i-Am, Diwan-i-Khas and above all by Taj Mahal. Shah Jahan is also remembered because of the exquisite Peacock Throne, studded with precious jewels. But the other side of his character cannot be ignored. Because of the inordinate expenditure on these ornate buildings he had to increase the state demand from one-third to one-half of the gross produce of the cultivators and thus impoverished the peasantry. There was a strain of cruelty and treachery in his make-up ; he mercilessly executed each and every possible claimant to the throne. As a son, he rebelled against his father and as a father, he could not win the love of his children. Though, generally speaking, there was peace and prosperity in the country, for him it was not "roses, roses all the way." During his reign Kandhar was lost to Shah Abbas II and in spite of mounting three costly expeditions, it could not be recaptured. Shah Jahan also failed miserably to reconquer Balkh and Badakshan on which crores of rupees were spent and thousands of lives were lost. But what we are concerned with is the religious policy of Shah Jahan. He was a narrow-minded bigoted prince ; a zealot sunni Musalman with a limited vision. The Shia Muslims were frowned upon in his court. He revived the pilgrimage tax and encouraged the conversion of Hindus. He introduced measures which ultimately led to the reactionary and fanatic reign of Aurangzeb. So far as Sikhs were concerned, they anticipated difficult days ahead.

Tegh Bahadur was seven years old when Shah Jahan ascended the throne. At this time, he underwent the most traumatic experience of his life. His elder brother Atal (or Baba Atal as he is usually

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called), who was only two years senior to him, was his constant companion at play. The two brothers were deeply attached to each other and went out together to play their games with their friends in the neighbourhood. One day the boys were playing some kind of bat and ball game in which each boy in turn had to do the bowling. It so happened that on that particular day, it become dark before the game was finished. One of the participants, by name Mohan, had yet to do his part of bowling. He promised to do his stint the next day. The following day before the play time, Mohan was bitten by a snake and died. When Tegh Bahadur and Baba Atal called at his house, they learnt about his death. Baba Atal, in his childish way, could not accept the fact that Mohan could leave them without doing his part of bowling. He put the circular end of the stick round Mohan's neck and said, "O come along, it is your turn to do the bowling today. You can't get away like that." To the amazement of everyone present there, Mohan got up, rubbed his eyes, smiled and quietly accompanied Tegh Bahadur and Baba Atal to the playground. It appears that Baba Atal, without being conscious of it, was gifted with some occult powers which, in his innocent and childish way, he put to action. But the news of the revival of dead to life spread like wild fire throughout the city of Amritsar. While the children played their game, crowds collected at every street corner and discussed the strange and miraculous happening. In no time, the news reached Guru Hargobind. His only comment was, "Who is there in our family who shares the powers of the Almighty; He alone gives and takes away life". In the evening Baba Atal returned home. At the prayer time, as was cumstomary, he went to pay his respects to his father, but Guru Hargobind turned his back towards him. In great anguish, he implored his father to let him know the cause of his displeasure. Guru Hargobind replied, "You have interfered with the Divine Will (Hukam). He alone bestows life and takes it away. None dare counteract the Divine Will." Baba Atal understood the implication of these stern words. He went out, recited his prayers, lay down on the bank of Kaulsar tank, covered himself with a white sheet and without a word, breathed his last. This place has been commemorated with a nine story Gurdwara.

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The death of Baba Atal was the first shock that shattered the peaceful equanimity of Teg Bahadur's mind. It dawned upon him that Baba Atal had paid the price of performing a miracle with his own life. For the first time, he came face to face with death. Here was a dear one, who had gone away to regions from where he could not be recalled and in a manner most mysterious and unintelligible. And death, what could it be? Tegh Bahadur could not understand its meaning but the thought disturbed him. "Some day", he said to himself, "I hope, I will understand what death means".

Time, like a gypsyman, kept moving, never resting, never stopping at any place even for a breather and months and years rolled by inexorably. Tegh Bahadar and his brothers continued their studies besides imbibing the family and environmental influences around them. On the whole, these years, though uneventful were full of experience and added much to the fund of their knowledge. Guru Hargobind had, in the meantime, organised a fair size well-trained army with trusted commanders such as Bidhi Chand. Bhai Jaita and Painda Khan.

Some time in 1631, a very important visitor came to spend a few days with Guru Hargobind. He was Baba Sri Chand, son of Guru Nanak. He was a venerable, old man, bent with years, with a staff in his hand, walking with slow, measured steps. He had spent most of his life wandering as an ascetic in search of the Ultimate Reality. After the death of Guru Nanak, he formed a sect of his own, known as *Udasis*. Though in terms of dogma, the Udasis followed the creed and beliefs of Guru Nanak, they practised celibacy and asceticism. They lived far away from the haunts of civilization and spent their lives either meditating in forests or mountain caves or wandering from place to place, spreading the word of God among the people. In course of time, they set up their own institutions known as *Bakhshishes* (Grace) or *Dhuans* (fire round which sadhus collected). These were their hermitages to which they returned after their wanderings. They also served as monasteries, where new recruits were initiated and trained. Though situated away from towns and villages, they attracted many visitors and on certain special days, crowds came to pay their homage. Indirectly, these centres served to propagate the faith of Guru Nanak because even though the monks wore ochre robes, they sang the hymns of Guru Nanak. Their

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fundamental beliefs and ethics were the same as that of Sikhism except that they rejected the householder's life because, according to them, it was contaminated with the vices of the world. They believed in the unity of Godhead and the attainment of *Nirvan* through *tapasya* and *Samadhi* (meditation).

Baba Sri Chand had come to Guru Hargobind with a definite purpose. For some time, he had been feeling that his end was near and he wanted to nominate his successor. He had, however, failed to find one among his followers. He came to enquire if Guru Hargobind would agree to assign one of his sons to carry on his work and inherit his organisation. When he made his request, the Guru replied without a moment of hesitation that he had four sons, one having died, and Baba Sri Chand could select anyone he thought fit for the task he had in mind. The four sons were lined up before Baba Sri Chand. He had to make his choice between Gurditta and Suraj Mal because the other two were too young to be entrusted with the task of providing leadership to a monastic organisation. Baba Sri Chand was attracted by the personality and bearing of Gurditta, not only because he was the elder of the two, but because he had a marked resemblance with Guru Nanak. With some apprehension and considerable hesitation, he went up to Gurditta and asked him if he would accept to renounce the world and put on the ochre robes. Gurditta simply bowed and touched his feet. With tears in his eyes, Baba Sri Chand embraced Gurditta and. announcing him as his successor, set about to arrange for the necessary ceremony. After the ceremony Gurditta took leave of his parents and his wife and went away with Baba Sri Chand. There were plenty of tears at his parting; particularly the mother and wife of Gurditta were deeply grieved but they had all been schooled in the philosophy of accepting the inevitable and trusting the will of God. Tegh Bahadur, sensitive young lad that he was, glimpsed another side of the family life through this strange and unexpected change in the life of his eldest brother Gurditta. Here was another parting, of a different kind from that of Baba Atal and this, too, was an enigma which he sought to understand but could not at that stage of his life.

Tegh Bahadur, too, was entering a new phase of life wherein he was to witne s the clash of arms between the Sikh and the Mughal forces. History was taking a new turn in its long

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march and reshaping the character of a simple, peace-loving religious community. It was the first step towards the culmination of the ideal set up by Guru Gobind Singh in his memorable couplet in Persian which, translated in English, means :

When all other means fail to solve my problem,
I will be legally justified to draw my sword.

Some time earlier, two armed skirmishes had taken place at Hargobindpur, a town recently founded by Guru Hargobind. As often happens, the trouble arose from a very minor incident and snow-balled into a regular clash between two fully armed regimental units. Bhagwan Das, a proud, aggressive landlord and a relative of the imperial Diwan at Lahore, Chandu Shah, forcibly occupied some land in Hargobindpur and began harassing the Sikhs living in the town. When the matter was reported to Guru Hargobind, he sent Gurditta to persuade Bhagwan Das to vacate the land but he would not listen to reason. Gurditta returned to Amritsar to report the result of his negotiation to his father. In his absence, hot words were exchanged, tempers were lost and in an armed clash between the two parties, Bhagwan Das was killed. His son, Karam Chand and Chandu's son Rattan Chand reported the matter to the Subedar Abdullah at Jullundur. The Subedar had been for a long time closely watching the training of troops and the arms built-up at Amritsar. He thought that some show of force was necessary to dampen the enthusiasm of the Sikhs. He sent a fully armed detachment of his troops with orders to occupy Hargobindpur. When the news reached Amritsar, a body of troops was despatched forthwith. The two forces met towards the end of the day on the outskirts of Hargobindpur and for two hours, they fought bitterly. The Sikhs stood their ground firmly and as dusk fell, the Mughal detachment withdrew leaving the dead behind. Both Rattan Chand and Karam Chand were killed in the battle. The Subedar sent a report to Wazir Khan, the Governor at Lahore, describing the fight as a high-handed

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action on the part of the Sikhs. Wazir Khan made some enquires and when he learnt about the real nature of the dispute, he reprimanded the Subedar and took no further action. Though it was a minor clash with the Mughal troops, its successful outcome gave the Sikhs a sense of elation and enhanced their self-confidence. This was the first taste of blood for the Sikh soldiers and they definitely relished it. To be in the thick of a battle gives rise to latent potentialities in the soldier and the best in his manhood finds expression. He is no longer afraid of death : he seeks glory in the clash of swords.

Every skirmish with the Mughal troops was followed by a period of peace. These skirmishes were in no way a challenge to the authority of the Mughal emperor nor to his armed forces. In these far off days, minor clashes occurred all over the country and not much attention was paid to them by the Government at Delhi ; they were chiefly the concern of local Faujdars.

In March 16`2, Tegh Bahadur was married to Gujri, daughter of Bhai Lal Chand and Bibi Kishan Kaur. The marriage was solemnised in Kartarpur. Tegh Bahadur was only eleven years old and his bride was probably two years junior to him. A marriage is an occasion for most of the relatives to get together. It provides an opportunity to meet relations whom otherwise one would not see for years. It also helps to revive old memories, strengthen old bonds and make new acquaintances. Men are at their best ; polite courteous, full of warmth and love. For women, it is a time to display their dresses and jewellery and arrange matches or look for future sons or daughters-in-law. There is much laughter and exchange of wit and repartee. And most of all, it is an occasion for rich feasts and over-eating. Tegh Bahadur enjoyed being dressed in the bright shiny clothes of a bridegroom, with a plume on his turban and with a sword in his hand. He appeared like a brave and bright young lad going out to bring home a beautiful, tiny little girl as a bride. The elders were too happy to help the young bride and bridegoom to perform the marriage ceremonies. The marriage ended as it began with the playing of Shanai and the beating of drums.

It was, however, some years later that Tegh Bahadur and Gujri came to live together as man and wife and understood the full meaning of their union. But both Tegh Bahadur and Gujri were destined to play unique and significant parts in the history

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of the Sikhs. Tegh Bahadur had to become a Yogi, a Guru and end as a martyr. Gujri had the supreme distinction of being the mother of Guru Govind Singh and the only woman in history who sacrificed her husband, her son and her four grandsons so that men be free to worship the Gods of their own choice unfettered by the tyrannical dictates of a bigoted Sultan.

The kaleidoscope of Tegh Behadur's life regrouped itself in a new pattern and within the space of a year, he witnessed three serious battles with the Mughal forces. These battles in a way reflected the change of the government's policy towards the Sikhs. Shah Jahan was even more intolerant than Jahangir in his ecclesiastical policy. He had issued instructions that no religion except Islam should be permitted to propagate its faith and all new temples under construction should be demolished. In pursuance of this policy the Gurdwara and *bowli* (the well) at Lahore were pulled down. Wazir Khan, the Governor of Punjab, was transferred to Agra and Kuliz Khan, the Faujdar at Lahore, was promoted and appointed the Governor. Mukhlis Khan was appointed as Faujdar and he was too anxious to find an opportunity to display his valour and loyalty to Experor Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan paid his first visit to Lahore as Emperor towards the end of 1633 and stayed for some months there.

It so happened that Shah Jahan went out hunting in a forest near Amritsar at the same time when Guru Harkrishen was occupied in the same exercise. Though the leaders of the two parties did not come face to face in the forest, some of the followers clashed because of a hawk they were chasing. Each party claimed that the hawk belonged to their leader. In this fight some of the Mughal soldiers were killed. When the report reached Lahore, both Kuliz Khan and Mukhlis Khan were most furious and sought the Emperor's permission to chastise the Guru for his high-handedness. There were many other enemies at the Emperor's court who regarded this as a fine opportunity to raise their voice against the Guru. They reminded Shah Jahan about the Guru's misdeeds. The Emperor ordered Mukhlis Khan to take an army of seven thousand soldiers and attack Amritsar.

That it was a surprise attack is evident from the fact that at that time Guru Hargobind was busy making preparations for the marriage of his daugher, Bibi Viro. The marriage was to be solemnised the very next morning. When the news reached the

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Guru, he immediately sent word to the bridegroom's party to stay back at Jhabal and not to come to Amritsar.

The battle was fought on 14 April 1634, some time towards the evening. The imperial forces overran the Lohgarh fort without much difficulty but were soon attacked from the two wings by the Guru's army under the command of Bhai Bidhi Chand and Painda Khan. The central sector was commanded by Bhai Tiloka. The battle raged furiously for the whole evening. With many dead and injured, the two armies retired when it became dark. During the night the city was evacuated. In the morning, the Guru's forces took the initiative and attacked the enemy. The Guru himself joined the attack and riding on a horse came face to face with Mukhlis Khan. He challenged Mukhlis Khan and standing on the stirrups, he attacked him with such force that with one stroke he cut his body into two. With the death of Mukhlis Khan, the imperial forces lost heart and soon retreated to Lahore. Though the Sikhs won the battle, they had to pay a heavy price in men and material.

A few days later Bibi Viro was married to Sadhu Ram at Jhabal. Though the marriage was celebrated with the usual pomp and show, the thoughts of the Guru and his commanders were with the men left behind on the battlefield of Amritsar. Everyone had a word of praise for Bidhi Chand, who not only fought like a tiger but was also in charge of the secret service which brought the news of the sudden attack of the Mughal forces. Mukhlis Khan had planned the attack with great care but the moment his forces turned on the road to Amritsar, Bidhi Chand's men rode haste-post-haste to Amritsar and conveyed the news to their leader.

Who was this man Bidhi Chand? Names of many commanders of Guru's forces are mentioned by historians and biographers such as Jati Mal, Jaitha, Piraga, Lainga, Lakhu, Rai Jodh, Bidhi Chand and Painda Khan but beyond their names, nothing much is known about them. This is not surprising because the contemporary recorded history of the Sikhs is scarce and scanty. But the folk-lore about Bidhi Chand and Painda Khan is somewhat intriguing and deserves brief mention.

Bidhi Chand was the son of Bhai Wasan and was born in a village known as Sur Singh. He grew to be a tall young man with a powerful physique and pugnacious temperament. The

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family had little land and less money. Bidhi Chand was constantly getting into village brawls. So he was sent to Sarhali where his maternal grandfather lived. Here, he had nothing much to do and the lack of occupation or employment made him exceedingly unhappy. His powerful body clamoured for action. He fell in the company of thieves and soon became their leader. He developed the uncanny craftiness of crooks and used a variety of strategems to accomplish his tasks. He had the ingenuity to disguise himself and the guts to go about masquerading as a nawab or a police or military official. He could also simulate as a grass cutter, a beggar or a fortune-teller. His face had the mobility of an actor and his dark eyes had the fathomless serenity that only enormous physical power can give. Notwithstanding the initial success as a robber, he was always getting into trouble with the cops and had been behind the bars a number of times. As luck would have it, during one of his bouts of depression, he came under the influence of Bhai Adli, a devout Sikh living in Sarhali, who persuaded him to change the pattern of his life. He invited Bidhi Chand to accompany him to Amritsar and seek the blessings of Guru Arjun Dev. With considerable doubt and misgiving, he went to Amritsar with Bhai Adli who presented him before the Guru as one seeking employment.

The Guru looked at this tall, well-built man who stood there with bowed head and folded hands. The Guru sensed the struggle that was raging within the man.

The Guru smiled and said, "You seek employment here. Tell me, what kind of work you have been doing so far?"

Bidhi Chand hesitated for a moment and then spoke truthfully, "Theft and robbery."

The Guru looked up and said, "What do you propose to do here? There is not much wealth here except the wealth of God's *Nam*."

"I will steal God's *Nam* if you will permit me, Sir."

Bidhi Chand fell on his knees and the Guru placed his hand on Bidhi Chand's head and said, "God bless you. You have come to the right place. There is much that you can do here."

Bidhi Chand's whole life was changed. He started working in Guru's *langar* and was ever-ready to do any job that needed muscle-power. But, as time passed, he turned to *Nam-Simran* and this, coupled with his work, gave him a sense of satisfaction

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and happiness he had not tasted before. When Guru Hargobind formed his army, he was in the front rank of the men to be selected and it is not surprising that he soon became one of the leading commanders of the Guru's regiments. He also organised a band of men who kept watch on the movement of Mughal forces in Lahore and Jullundur. It was a kind of minor secret service which had its own code and its means of despatching information without any delay.

Bidhi Chand's ability to disguise himself in a number of ways came handy within a year of the battle at Amritsar. After the battle, the Guru went on a tour of the Malwa region and spent eight months propagating his faith and spreading the word of courage among the peasantry. He often told his audience, "I haven't got a ta'wiz or mantra or magical incantation which can help you but if you keep God's name in your heart and sword in your hand, you will always be successful." At each place people offered their presents. At Gursar Sidhar, Bhai Dyal Chand presented gifts sent by the Sangat at Kabul. He also told the Guru that two beautiful horses that Bhai Karori Mal had brought for the Guru had been confiscated by Anayat Ullah at Lahore. The Guru thanked all those who had brought gifts and addressing Bhai Dyal Chand, he said, "Tell Bhai Kirori Mal that his gift has reached me. Bidhi Chand will arrange for the horses to reach Amritsar."

Bidhi Chand was delighted with the task assigned to him. He went to Lahore disguised as a grass cutter and with a bundle of grass sat outside the fort. When the fort commander came out, Bidhi Chand offered to sell him grass for the horses, praising it as the best grass available for miles. He also talked glibly about the way horses should be looked after as though he was an expert and had reared horses for generations. The fort commander was delighted to find such a knowledgeable person and offered him service in his stables. With considerable show of hesitation and a lot of haggling about his salary, he agreed to serve in the fort. He was assigned the task of looking after some of the best horses in the stable including the two which Kirori Mal had recently brought from Kabul. With his fund of stories and anecdotes and the way he squandered his hard earned money, he gained immediate popularity among his co-workers. After a couple of months, when he got his salary, he announced that he had decided to entertain his friends to a lavish dinner in

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honour of the birth anniversary of his guru. He served a sumptuous meal with plenty of drinks. When by the middle of night, they all lay in drunken stupor, he quietly put out all the lights, rode one of the Kabul horses and jumped into the river Ravi that ran along the fort. Before daylight, he was in Amritsar and presented the horse to Guru Hargobind.

For the second horse, he went to Lahore disguised as an astrologer and palmist. He looked a real Sadhu with his flowing beard, matted hair and ochre coloured robes. He met a new fort commander because the earlier one had been dismissed for negligence. He won over the commander's trust by disclosing his past and predicting a great future for him. The commander was, however, mainly interested in knowing who decamped with the horse and where. Bidhi Chand assured him that it was the easiest thing, for an astrologer to divine. Only the same conditions had been created—time and circumstances when the horse was stolen and through the help of the stars, it would be easy to find out the whereabouts of the horse. The commander readily agreed. At the middle of the night, all the lights were put out and inside the fort Bidhi Chand sat under the stars all by himself. Quietly he went to the familiar stable and took out the other horse and, as before, jumped into the river before the very eyes of the guards. He was pursued but could not be captured. On reaching Amritsar, he presented the horse to the Guru.

Tegh Bahadur was delighted when Bidhi Chand came back home safely. A warm student-teacher relationship had developed between the two and there was an element of hero-worship in Tegh Bahadur because of the arduous and risky adventures in which his teacher was involved. Tegh Bahadur was quite excited when Bidhi Chand narrated the whole story of his recovery of the two horses, particularly his two jumps from the rampart of fort into the river riding on the bare backs of the horses. Bidhi Chand also told his young student that it was not the end of the story. The Mughals would be fuming with impatient anger. Now that they know where the horses had gone, they would do everything to recover them. Bidhi Chand had a feeling that some sort of battle was imminent. They had better keep their forces alerted.

In an open darbar before Akal Takht, Bidhi Chand was honoured by the Guru and various gifts were bestowed upon him.

As predicted by Bidhi Chand, the Mughal forces attacked the

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Sikh camp and on 16 December 1634, a bloody battle was fought at Marhaj (Lahira). The Sikhs had been forewarned and were well entrenched and attacked the enemy from three sides. Though Tegh Bahadur did not personally participate in the battle, he watched it from a pivotal point and felt the full excitement of the battle as orders were being issued from the command post by Guru Hargobind and messengers were sent out to various sectors. After a head-on fight between the cavalry regiments, there was hand-to-hand fight between the soldiers on foot. From morning till evening the battle raged furiously and the dead and the dying lay all over the battle-field. As light began to fail, the Mughal forces lost hope of victory and left the field. Once again faith and determination brought victory to the Guru's forces. Guru Hargobind and his men struck the camp and retired to Kartarpur. Here prayers were offered for the dead and all those who had fought valiantly were honoured and given robes, weapons and other gifts. Among the recipients of special gifts were Bidhi Chand and Painda Khan.

Just as the Lahira battle was indirectly the cause of Bidhi Chand's escapade, the next battle at Kartarpur was caused by Painda Khan's desertion and his instigation of the Governor of Lahore. Painda Khan was a Pathan mercenary and had joined the Guru's forces along with some of his followers. He was a tall powerfully built Pathan, proud and arrogant; a fine soldier and an excellent commander. He had a personality that commanded attention; a bold visage, a snow-white skin burnt brown on sunny, barren hills; dark, heavy moustaches turned upward, light brown eyes and a somewhat large aquiline nose. Dressed in his long loose shirt, baggy Salwar and a twisted silken turban overs a hard, embroidered skull-cap, with its upper end spread out like a fan, he looked like a born leader of men. But fate had been unkind to him. By a strange quirk in his character, he failed to make headway under various Pathan and Turk nobles. Disgruntled and unhappy, he turned a mercenary. Like all mercenaries, he had no loyalty. He worked exclusively for money. He was a soldier because that was the only profession that suited his temperament and there was nothing else he could do to earn a living. Essentially, he was a bully and his bark was harder than his bite. Like all aggressive men, he was extremely touchy about his own honour but absolutely insensitive to pain he inflicted on others. He was, therefore, feared more than loved. In Guru Hargobind, he found a

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gracious master, who bestowed all kinds of gifts on him. Whenever Sangats from distant places brought costly gifts for the Guru, the Guru, in his generosity, passed some of them on to Painda Khan. He had unfortunately a greedy and rapacious son-in-law, Osman Khan. Osman Khan was not content to take away things from Painda Khan's house but from whatever place he could lay his hands upon. He stole a hawk which Guru Hargobind had given to his son Gurditta and prevailed upon Painda Khan to keep it a secret. When the Guru enquired from Painda Khan, he swore that the hawk was not in his house. When his house was searched, the hawk was found there. He felt disgraced and in a huff, deserted the Guru.

The Guru dismissed the whole episode as a minor domestic incident but Painda Khan thirsted for revenge. He felt humiliated and dishonoured. He joined the imperial forces and set about plotting against the Guru Wazir Khan was no longer in Lahore as he had been posted as Subedar of Agra. Painda Khan approached the new Governor through Kale Khan, the Subedar at Jullundur. The two together convinced the Governor that the un-Islamic centre of Sikh faith should be destroyed. Shah Jahan, on his way back from Kashmir, happened to be in Lahore at that time. The Governor sought the Emperor's permission. The Emperor, ever ready to destroy anyone who even vaguely challenged his authority, ordered that Kale Khan and Painda Khan be given necessary military assistance to proceed against the Guru.

The Sikhs at Lahore immediately informed the Guru about the Emperor's decision. The Sikhs hastily fortified their position and waited for the onslaught of the imperial forces. The commanders of the various sectors spread out in a semicircle and lay in readiness for the enemy to advance within the range of their attack. Mohsin Fani tells us that 26 April 1635, was a hot and windy day and dust rose high in the sky. The imperial forces were led by a troop of horsemen. The cavalry attacked in force hoping to overrun the fortified position of the Sikhs. From three sides, the Sikhs attacked them fiercely. For some time a running battle was fought by the two sides ; enveloped with dust they could hardly see each other. Swords clashed, horses fell and men leapt at each other. There was no let up ; doggedly, they chased each other and fought like fierce animals. The din was terrible ; the horses neighed, the men shouted and cursed, the trumpets blew and the war-drums echoed over the battlefield. When the horses

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had scattered in different directions, the infantry stepped in and hand-to-hand battle was fought between the two adversaries. The commanders rode on horses, urging their men to destroy the enemy.

It was a memorable day for Tegh Bahadur because he, too, had been permitted to join the battle. He rode a charger and with all the zest of a youth, he attacked his enemies fiercely. With Bidhi Chand and Jati Mal as his companions, he rode into the thick of the battle and fought like a lion. When he returned to the camp, with cuts and bruises, covered with dust and his armour wet with perspiration, his father welcomed him as one warrior to another. He embraced Tegh Bahadur and proudly looked into his eyes and said, "That's the way to fight son ; today, you have justified your name as Tegh Bahadur."

Leaving Tegh Bahadur behind, the Guru rode away leading his battalion of horsemen. He was a skilled warrior, bold and fearless and his presence put new life into his men. His armour glittered in the sunshine and his bearing and personality singled him out wherever he went. As chance would have it, he came face to face with Painda Khan. The Guru challenged him and permitted him to be the first to attack. Painda Khan rode headlong and attacked with all his might ; the Guru stood in his stirrups and warded his attack on his shield. Painda Khan turned back and attacked again but the Guru hit him so hard that he fell from his horse and his sword was no longer in his hand. The Guru alighted from his horse and asked him to pick up his sword. Painda Khan was somewhat unnerved but after he had collected his sword, he felt confident and came cautiously towards the Guru. With a sudden war cry, he jumped and attacked the Guru. The Guru stood his ground and said, "Not this way but this way Painda Khan", as though he was teaching him the art of swordsmanship. Painda Khan lay dying at his feet. The Guru bent down in compassion and said, "You were once my companion-in-arms ; I did not want to kill you." The dying man opened his eyes and in agony and pain murmured, "Your sword is my *Kalma*, my master. I own my error. Let me die with your blessings." The Guru raised his hand and said softly, "God be with you". He felt sad that he had to kill an old friend and a comrade. He ordered his burial and returned to the camp.

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The battle continued for three days. Both Kale Khan and Qutab Khan were killed. Osman Khan, son-in-law of Painda Khan, also died fighting. The Mughal army, accepting its defeat, went back to Lahore licking its wounds. Once again the Sikhs won the battle though they had to pay a heavy price for it. Hundreds of their comrades lay dead on the battlefield.

Despite the fact that the Guru's forces had won all the three battles fought against the Mughals and the feeling of confidence and unity it had generated among his soldiers, Guru Hargobind considered it impolitic to carry on a policy of direct confrontation with the Mughal army. He was fully conscious of the limitation of his own armed forces. He thought it wise to withdraw to Kiratpur, a tiny town at the foot-hills of Kahlur mountains. Kiratpur had been founded by Baba Gurditta and was situated far away from the main routes of the Mughal armies moving from Lahore to Agra. Here the Guru was unlikely to be involved in the political intrigues at the imperial court or the military exploits of Governors and subedars. Guru Hargobind spent the remaining years of his life at Kiratpur.

After the hectic life of military exploits and the incessant travelling, life at Kiratpur, with its background of hills and forests, was quiet and peaceful. Guru Hargobind had established excellent relations with the Hill Rajas of Kulu, Suket, Chamba, Mandi, Haripur and Pilibit. It is claimed that he had converted some of the rajas and their courtiers to Sikhism and that Sikhism as a religion was gaining popularity among the people of these states. In any case the Guru must have been held in high estimation by these princes because he was the only one who had fought and defeated the Mughal forces. Moreover, he represented a faith that championed the freedom of worship and the equality of man. He was the personification of free spirit and indirectly a challenge to the bigotry and excessive zeal of Islam as practised in the mediaeval times. Under the circumstances, it was but natural that the Guru and the Hill Rajas often met and exchanged presents and lived in the amiable atmosphere of respect and friendship.

A great change, however, was coming in the life of Guru Hargobind ; he was slowly turning from the active to a more contemplative way of life. His inner self was asserting to seek the greater self in which it had to merge. He was fast losing interest

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in the princely life he had led and was spending ever increasing time in solitude and all by himself. This mood was further strengthened by the unhappy feud in the family and the deaths of some near and dear ones. When the Guru left Kartarpur, Dhirmal, son of Baba Gurditta, remained behind and took over the family possessions including the original copy of *Adi Granth*. He was a haughty and ambitious young man, who assumed that when Baba Gurditta died, he would be nominated the next guru and the possession of Adi Granth would buttress his position. When the Guru asked him to send the Adi Granth to Kiratpur, he refused. He also refused to go to Kiratpur when invited to attend the ceremonies connected with the death of his own father, Baba Gurditta. And finally, after some time, when he did go to Kiratpur, he behaved so atrociously that he was ordered to go back to Kartarpur. At Kartarpur, he collected around him the enemies of the Guru and set about hatching all kinds of conspiracies. All these activities embittered Guru Hargobind's life. A man of his temper could not tolerate such behaviour but somehow he could not bring himself to take action against his own grandson.

There was also the dark shadow of death that had cast a gloom on the whole family. The Guru perfectly accepted the inevitability of death and understood its purpose and meaning but, as a human being, he could not escape the sorrow that came with the passing away of relations and friends. Apart from the death of comrades who died in war, death had been almost an annual visitor since the death of Baba Atal. Somewhere around 1630, Baba Sri Chand died and in 1631, was followed by the death of Guru's first wife Damodri, mother of Baba Gurditta. In 1631, passed away the great savant Bhai Gurdas. He died in Goindwal and the Guru was present at his death bed. He acted as his pall-bearer and lighted his funeral pyre. Early in 1632, passed away the great doyen of Sikhism, Baba Buddha. He died in a village called Ramdas, not far from Amritsar. The Guru reached Ramdas before the grand old man lost consciousness. He held Baba Buddha's hand ; the old man opened his feeble eyes and recognising the Guru, murmured his gratefulness and asked for the Guru's blessings. The Guru raised his hand and blessed him. It was the only time people witnessed two tears roll down the face of Guru Hargobind. In 1634, his young son, Anil Rai died.

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In 1635, came the sad news of the passing away of Mian Mir, a great friend of the Guru's father and the noble saint and Sufi who laid the foundation stone of the Harimandir. In 1638, Mata Marwahi, the second wife of Guru Hargobind and his son Baba Gurditta died. Here, in the peaceful surroundings and solitude of Kiratpur, all these memories crowded his mind ; the past came rushing like a film on a screen recreating his earlier life. At the same time, it made him feel the evanescence of life and he hastened to discard these shadows and think of the work that lay ahead.

For Tegh Bahadur, the nine years from 1635 to 1644, spent at Kiratpur, were years, of leisure. He completed his education and spent much of his time wandering among the hills and making friends with the princes and people living in that region. Even though young, he could not escape the impact of so many deaths in the family. Atal Rai and Anil Rai were his playmates and their departure created a void, he could not easily fill. The youthful and handsome Baba Gurditta, attracted him in a special way ; he looked up to him and thought him to be an epitome of virtue of excellence. His departure as a sanyasi, his uncanny exhibition of miraculous powers and finally his sudden death raised issues which could not be easily resolved. There was something mysterious and awe-inspiring about the deaths of both Atal Rai and Baba Gurditta. Often his mind pondered over these problems and he longed to possess powers to see beyond the veil of Maya. He also missed his two aged teachers, Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas. They were not teachers in the ordinary sense of the word ; they were sages, old and experienced, very much like Socrates and Plato, who had delved deep into the secrets of life and had the ability to explain the physical and metaphysical phenomenon in simple words. And, above all, they were the stalwarts of the Sikh faith and to listen to them was to gain a glimpse into the rich storehouse of knowledge embodied in Gurbani. They carried some kind of promethean fire within them and shared its warmth and glow with all those who came in touch with them. As years rolled by, Tegh Bahadur began to feel a sense of loneliness, as though he was all by himself and had to carve out his future exclusively by the resources that lay hidden within him. Like his father, he too, turned inward and devoted himself more and more to *Nam-Simran*.

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Early in 1644, Guru Hargobind felt that his end was drawing near and he had to decide the question of the appointment of his successor. He had always thought that Baba Gurditta was the one to be the future torch bearer of the faith. But Baba Gurditta had been taken away and he was left with two sons, Suraj Mal and Tegh Bahadur. He somehow thought that Suraj Mal could not carry the burden of heavy responsibility involved. For Tegh Bahadur, he had other thoughts, which the future alone was to reveal. Baba Gurditta had two sons, Dhirmal and Har Rai. Dhir Mal was temperamentally unfit for the exalted office of the Guru. Even though Har Rai was only fourteen years old, the Guru decided in his favour and some time in February 1664, he performed the usual ceremony of placing five paise and a coconut before Har Rai and bowed before him and declared him the seventh Guru of the Sikhs. On 4 March 1664, Guru Hargobind left for his heavenly abode and with him ended the glorious first military period of the Sikh faith.

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4

The Hermit

At the time of the nomination of Guru Har Rai as the future Guru of the Sikhs by Guru Hargobind, Mata Nanaki, the mother of Tegh Bahadur, strongly protested that the rightful claim of her son had been ignored. She had pleaded that Tegh Bahadur was senior in age to Guru Har Rai and, because of his religious bent of mind and sound organisational capabilities, he was most suited to act as the pontiff of the Sikh faith. But Guru Hargobind had, however, made up his mind and to the protestation of Mata Nanaki, he replied enigmatically, "Be patient. The time is yet not ripe. He is destined to face a great challenge and he needs to prepare himself for it. For the time being, he should go to Bakala and live there." Mother Nanaki was deeply disappointed and decided to accompany Tegh Bahadur to Bakala and live there with him. Early in 1644, Tegh Bahadur, along with his mother, wife and a retinue of servants and horsemen left for Bakala.

Bakala was the ancestral home of mother Nanaki and her parents, Hari Chand and Hardevi, lived there. It was, in those days, a quiet little town situated on the bank of the river Beas and surrounded by green fields and distant forests. Hari Chand was a well-to-do farmer and had a large, sprawling house. Tegh Bahadur and his companion were warmly received and comfortably lodged. Relations and acquaintances from nearby villages came to meet them and for some days the place hummed with activity but soon returned to its sleeply and peaceful tenor of life.

Tegh Bahadur felt that the new surroundings demanded a

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change in the pattern of his life. Kiratpur, with its background of hills and forests, had provided an ideal place for riding and hunting. The cordial relations with hill rajas made it possible to visit these states and enjoy the hospitality of the princes. Kiratpur itself was a busy place because of the presence of Guru Hargobind; masands and Sikhs from different places were constantly coming to pay their homage to the Guru. His own studies had kept him fairly busy. Here, in Bakala, he was virtually alone. But he was young and powerfully built and his physique clamoured for exercise and activity. Accompanied by one or two of his retainers, he often went out riding far into the forest, hunting whatever came his way but he missed the companionship of friends and comrades. Occasionally, he went out to swim in the river Beas and enjoyed being carried by the fast moving currents. He also took to long walks on the river bank or among the fields, absorbed in his own thoughts. Slowly his mind was turning away from the outdoor activities and he felt the urge to study the ancient scriptures of India to explore the deeper recesses of his own mind. He had been in Bakala for about two years when he felt that he did not need the horses and the retainers any more. He sent them back to Kiratpur. He himself shifted from the house of his maternal grandparents and went to live with Bhai Mehra.

Bhai Mehra was a disciple of Guru Hargobind and had built a new house in the fond hope that some day the Guru would come to live there. But instead of the Guru, it was his son who made it his residence and in the course of time transformed it into the most sacred place in Bakala for all times to come. Even though Bhai Mehra was several years senior to Tegh Bahadur, a warm friendship grew between them and they began to share their thoughts with each other.

They often went out together and through the silent communication of companionship, felt the slow march of time and the ever changing pattern of seasons. Sometimes they were out before the twilight and watched the sun rise like a ball of fire, in all its majesty, painting the sky red and flooding the field with soft brilliance. For them, it symbolised the creative energy of the universe because without the sun, all life would be obliterated and there would be nothing except death and darkness. It was therefore not strange that some people worshipped the sun as a

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mighty god. Sometimes towards the evening they sat together on a hill and let the darkness gather round them. For some time the sounds and smells of night would reach them; the monotonous chant of a singer, the barking of a dog at a distance, the rustle of the wind through the trees and the scents of jasmine, river-water and ripe-corn. The stars would come out one by one and soon the milky way would be resplendent with millions of stars. Suddenly, utter silence would prevail everywhere. They would feel one with the universe and become conscious of the cosmic power that guided and sustained its perpetual motion. But whence this cosmic power? Who guided and sustained the stars or the universe? These were questions which could not be answered. In the same way, when they watched the monsoon clouds gather in dark, massive formations, filling the whole horizon and forked lightening flash across the sky, followed by ear-splitting thunder and torrential rain, they felt in some measure the hidden force of nature. And rain, too, was a symbol of life, a life giving force without which nothing could grow. They were not surprised when they recalled that in the early stages of civilization, rain had been defied and worshipped.

During the winter months, when they sat round the log fire and watched the flames leap upward, they exchanged meaningful glances. Here, too, was another god, without which man could not exist. Was fire, too, a symbol of the Eternal Fire of which man carried a spark within him?

In their own way, they were discovering the hidden meanings behind these symbols of the Eternal Power. More and more symbols came to their notice. When they went for a bath to the village well, they noticed the wheel turning round and round in a never ending circle. Doesn't this circle represent something beyond the motion of the wheel? The circle had neither a beginning nor an end; surely it represented eternity, the never ending wheel of time. In the spent sunlight of autumn, they watched the brown curled leaves of the trees float down and softly lie on the ground to be swept away by the breeze. Doesn't that represent the cycle of life ? In the same way, fruits and flowers, ripen, fade and fall and are reborn again ? That was indeed the never-ending cycle of births and deaths.

And what was more, the symbols had become deeply associated with religion; in fact they had become the objects of worship

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in themselves. For ages men had worshipped the symbols rather than what lay behind them or what they represented. Apart from the worship of sun, fire, water and other symbols, there were the anthropomorphic symbols in human form. They were the idols, images, statues and painting of gods such as Buddha, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, Durga and Christ. Why do people worship the images or idols? Probably because of two reasons. Firstly, because most men could not conceive of God in any other form and being men of poor understanding, they needed the physical symbols of holy personalities for the purposes of worship. Secondly, most men follow the cult of body worship; they are fond of their own bodies or bodies of those they love. They never or hardly think of the spirit behind the body. This body-cult takes the shape of hero-worship. Hence the images are made of clay or metal and wood and each one serves as means of remembering the particular hero, god or goddess. But it is obvious that this was an early stage in the spiritual development of man. Men must transcend the body-consciousness and go beyond the images and become conscious of the Divine Spirit. The Divine must not be brought to the level of the image.

Both Tegh Bahadur and Bhai Mehra understood that the ritualistic worship through images and idols had a limited scope. They were also aware that there was a higher form of worship through prayer or jap—the repetition of the Divine Name, and also of the still higher form through meditation when the devotee identified himself with the Ultimate Reality. No doubt they were aware that the Infinite consciousness was beyond all names, beyond all personalities but the attainment of this higher goal was still a great mystery and demanded a long and arduous spiritual journey. Here Tegh Bahadur and Bhai Mehra parted company; Bhai Mehra was happy with his jap but Tegh Bahadur wanted to pursue the quest and reach the ultimate goal.

It was at this stage that Teg Bahadur asked Bhai Mehra to have an underground cell dug up under his bedroom so that he could meditate on the Lord's Name without being disturbed. He had read about the various yogic systems and practices in ancient India but he was also aware that, in the final analysis, each Yogi had to evolve his own system in consonance with his individual physical and spiritual resources. He also remembered

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the enigmatic words of his father that he had to prepare himself for a challenge that lay ahead and thought, with a faint sense of amusement, that probably Yoga was the best way to train oneself for whatever hurdles he had to cross in the course of his life. As he thought of Yoga, the words of Guru Nanak came to his mind:

Yoga is neither the patched coat, nor the Yogi's staff,
Nor the besmirching oneself with ashes;
Nor in wearing earrings, nor close-cropping the head,
Nor in blowing the horn.
If one remaineth detached in the midst of attachment,
One attaineth the true state of Yoga—
One becometh not a Yogi by mere talk.
If one looketh upon all creation alike, that one alone is acclaimed as a true Yogi.
Yoga does not consist in abiding in the cremation ground or among tombs or in entering the pseudo-trances.
Yoga consists not in roaming the world, nor
in bathing at pilgrim spots.
If one remaineth detached in the midst of attachment,
Then, verily one attaineth the true state of Yoga.

Guru Nanak made it clear that one need not go to the Himalayan caves to practise Yoga. Morever, it was not necessary to become a Sadhu or a fakir and put on patched clothes or besmear one's body with ashes and renounce the world, and live in a graveyard or a cremation ground. At the same time, Yoga did not demand that one should wander ceaselessly and bathe at all the sacred pilgrim spots of the world. These were the non-essential aspects of Yoga. The core of Yoga was a state of mind where one remained detached from the attachments of the world. Its chief emphasis was on non-attachment which is called *Vairagya* in Sanskrit. Guru Nanak has chiefly emphasised two aspects of Yoga, one, that we can continue to live a normal life and two, that we have to practise inner renunciation.

Vairagya (non-attachment) and inner renunciation are conditions of the mind. They cannot be achieved except through the control of the mind. It will be recalled that Patanjali, whose *Yoga Sutras* is regarded as the highest authority on the subject, defines Yoga as the "Science of controlling the activities of the mind". It may

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be asked why do we need to control the mind? Guru Nanak has described mind as an intoxicated elephant let loose in the forest. With its powerpacked body, it destroys everything that comes in his way. Human mind, too, has immense resources and is restless like quicksilver. It is constantly on the move from one thing to another. Its hunger is inappeasable. It desires to collect all the wealth of the world. It seeks for itself all the power to rule over others; indeed it dreams to conquer the world and be its sole master. There is no end to luxuries and pleasures it demands. With its unlimited range, it scans the whole world for its wines, women, delicacies of food, variety of dresses, curios, latest gadgets and what not for his satisfaction. For its own advancement, it is willing to commit every possible crime; to rob and plunder, to kill ones own father, mother and brother, to destroy crops, burn whole cities, exterminate whole communities and turn men into machines. Besides its two chief characteristics of restlessness and insatiable hunger, it has a tendency to lean more towards evil than good. Unless leashed firmly and kept in control, it tends to commit every possible sin and every heinous crime. And what is more, every success and satisfaction increases its attachment and its demands increase ever more. For example, the conquest of a city leads to the desire to conquer a country and, in turn, to conquer a whole continent. There is a Persian saying that ten Durvashes can happily sleep together on a carpet but two kings cannot breathe the air of the same continent. It is also surprising that the human mind never thinks about human limitations and the actual needs of man. There is a fascinating story of Tolstoy entitled, "How much land a man needs"? A farmer was permitted to take over all the land he could cover on foot in one day. In his greed he ran and ran, skirting one farm after another but before he reached the destination, he fell down and died. In the end, he was allotted a piece of land measuring eight feet by four feet and was buried there. The human mind, above all, seeks happiness. But where is happiness ? Does it lie in external things, things that can be bought and hoarded? Dr. Balbir Singh, the well-known Punjabi scholar, in one of his essays, describes the story of the Satan feverishly pursuing God and God not being able to find a place to hide himself. He thinks of a strategem and hides in the heart of the Satan. The Satan looks for God everywhere but never in his heart. Man, too, seeks happiness everywhere but seldom looks within him-

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self wherein lies the fount of all happiness. It is necessary to control the mind but for the union with the ultimate Reality, it is a must.

Before we deal with Patanjali's pithy aphorisms in which he describes the various steps that lead to the control of the mind, we might consider for a moment the eternal question which has baffled mankind for ages, "What am I ?" And, the most terrifying aspect of this question is that each man has to discover for himself the answer to this question.

In the question, "What am I ?", the 'I' is the most important part. How do we identify it ? Is it by the name of the individual, Mr. so and so or is it by his relationship with others e.g., father, son, brother, uncle etc, or is it by his profession such as teacher, doctor, engineer, diplomat or banker or is it by his religious label, Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Christian or is it the parts of his body or the sum total of these parts ? None of these adequately describe him ; all of them represent only partial or superficial aspects of the individual. May be our inability to describe the 'I' is due to the limitation of language or the limited capacity of our sensory powers. Often words are inadequate vehicle for the description of certain types of experience. Human mind, too, has limited powers. The conscious, the unconscious and the supra-conscious regions of the mind play their own part and except for the first, the other two are not controlled by the individual. The conscious mind depends primarily on reason but reason is easily influenced by emotions and events. And, at best, reason deals with objective reality and has little to do with inner feelings or the working of the unconscious or supra-conscious parts of the mind. So far as our sensory powers are concerned, their limitations are too well-known. Our eyes can only see a limited part of the spectrum ; we cannot see the ultra-violet and infra-red lights. We cannot see the microbes without a microscope. Our ears can listen to a limited range of sound vibrations. It is, therefore, obvious that our mind is seriously handicapped ; it can visualise a limited aspect of reality and its reasoning is inherently imperfect. But the evolutionary process of mankind does not end with reason. Intuitively we can reach where reason fails to ; we are capable of truth-consciousness, which acts without the processes of induction and deduction. By this process of evolution, we can gain consciousness of many subtler aspects of existence ; we become capable of being sensitive to finer vibrations of light

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and sound. As this subtler consciousness continues to grow, we become conscious that behind all these aspects of 'I', there is something more abiding, something permanent, something real, that which is called the 'Self'. It is through the practice of Yoga that we learn about this significant part of our being. Later we attain to a still higher stage of consciousness through Samadhi, known as God-consciousness, when the relationship of the Self (Atman) is established directly with the universal soul (Parmatman).

It may be added that the question 'What am I ?' is among the many questions asked by the Upanishadic seers, such as whence this life ? Who commands it ? What is its purpose ? Why does the human mind not keep still ? What makes the eye see, the ear hear ? What happens when we sleep, nay, what happens when we die ? Who created the world ? Was it God or someone else ? etc. etc. The Upanishadic age was an age of enquiry ; an age when all such questions were asked boldly and their answers sought fearlessly. Out of these questions arose two schools of thought, the Idealistic School and the Materialistic School. The idealists believed that Brahma or God created the Universe and the materialists denied the existence of God and claimed that matter *per se* was the basis or original cause of all things. Without going into the details of the various schools of Hindu philosophy that emerged out of this discussion, it may be stated that the most acceptable among the Idealistic School of thought was the Vedantic system. It was edited and systematised by Badarayana in his well-known work *Brahma Sutra*. Vedanta declared that Brahma was the Supreme Intelligence ; the primal cause of all things. He created the Universe, permeated through it and thus manifested Himself through his creation. Thus matter and spirit became one ; God and prakriti became identical. Brahma was omnipresent and immortal. Since man co-existed with Him, he, too, had something of the immortal in him. This immortal part was called the Self or Soul or Atman. The Upanishadic system worked out the relationship of Atman and Brahma and thus identified the individual soul with God. It was believed that the Universe was in a flux and in an endless motion, and in its heart, there was peace and rest, which constituted the permanent, unchanging reality, the Brahma. Similarly, in man, ever restless, always in quest and commotion, there abided the reality, the Atman. For the first time, Upanishads

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defined God and found it in the heart of man. From this notion, they concluded that when man left the world, he became one with Him. In the words of Chandogya Upanishad, "This myself within the heart is Brahman. I depart from hence and merge in Him." The identity of Brahma and Atman is presented in the Upanishads in the most artistic and unforgettable word. To quote but a few examples :

"The Self, smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest, lives within the hearts of all men. When a man becomes free of desires, and purifies the mind and senses, he will behold the glory of the Self, and go beyond all sorrow," —Katha Upanishad

> "As the sun, lighting the world, is not affected by impurities it shines upon, so the Self, dwelling in all things, is not touched by the evil existing outside it."
>
> —Katha Upanishad
>
> "As the spokes of the wheel meet in the hub, so the many forms of Brahman centre in the lotus of the heart where the channels meet. Meditate on the Self as Om, and cross the sea of darkness." —Mundaka Upanishad

In Chandogya Upanishad, Uddalka asks his learned but conceited and arrogant son Svetaketu whether he had received the instruction "by which one hears what cannot be heard, perceives what cannot be perceived, knows what cannot be known."

The son is humbled and accepts his ignorance and asks for instruction. In a dialogue of great subtlety and artistic ingenuity, supplement with many examples, the father came to the conclusion :

"In that which is the subtle essence, in that all that exists has its self. That is the Truth. That is Self. That are Thou."

It simply means that he who knows his own Atman, knows the Atman of the universe, Brahman. Atman was regarded as the essence of all internal reality while Brahman was described as the trascendent unity of the world.

"Seek Brahman by faith, devotion, meditation and concentration. It is not obtained by work, nor by offsprings, nor by wealth ; only by renunciation does man achieve immortality."

—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

Guru Nanak, too, subscribed to this relationship of Atman and Parmatman, As has already been stated. Guru Nanak, in the

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Mul Mantra (basic creed) described the nature of God and called Him *Karta-Purukh* (Creator, all-pervading). In no uncertain terms, he describes Him as the creator of the universe.

"Thou art the Creator *Pursha*, unfathomable. Thou has created the whole universe, of many colours and in many ways. Thou knowest how thou did'st originate it." —Var Magh

Again :

O Lord, Thou prevailest everywhere
and Thou hast fashioned the whole world.
Besides thee, there is none other.

—Malar Var

And, the relationship of God and Soul is explained by Guru Nanak in unequivocal words :

"Light fills all souls and that light is He.
Through His illumination all get illuminated."

—Dhanasari Sohila

Again :

He is the soul of all Souls.
He pervades all vessels.
Through the Grace of the Guru, the light shone in the heart,
And effortlessly the Soul was absorbed in peace.

—Malar Asht.

Again :

The one Supreme Lord is unique.
He is immortal, unborn, without
Caste, without involvement.
He is unfathomable, beyond the reach of senses,
Without form or lines.
Searching for Him, I found Him in every Soul.

—Bilawal Thitti

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Guru Nanak also stressed that man should gain consciousness of his inner self and advised him, first of all, to understand the nature of his mind and thereafter to control it so that among all the attachments of the world, he could remain unattached.

O my mind, thou art the embodiment
Of Divine Light. Know thy essence.

Again :

He who knows the Self
And remains absorbed in contemplation
Wins the object of life.

—Basant Asht

Again :

Knowing that everything belongs to Him,
He remains detached.
He dedicates his body and mind to Him
whom they belong to.
He, then, neither comes nor goes.
Says Nanak—He merges in the Truth of all truths.

—Bilawal Asht.

It will be thus observed that even though Guru Nanak initiated a new religion with its own scripture, its own method of worship and its own religious laws, his concept of the Self and the relationship of Atman and Parmatman as also the means of establishing this relationship through meditation were very similar to the Vedantic system. It was, therefore, very natural that Tegh Bahadur adopted the method of Yoga to control his mind, to gain consciousness of Self within him and to establish a direct relationship with Parmatman. He undertook the long and arduous journey so aptly described by Patanjali in his Sutras (aphorisms).

Yoga, as already stated, is the science of controlling the activities of the mind. The human mind reacts to everything it comes in contact with, whether man, events or environment. As a result, it experiences the feelings of pleasure, pain, joy, hatred,

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anger, enmity etc. Pleasure and joy result in attachment and when deprived of the sources of attachment, it feels frustrated and miserable. If a man could control his mental reactions to external impacts, or, in other words, control his mind, pain and misery would be eliminated from his life. He would lead a tranquil and serene existence unclouded or tarnished by the strains and stresses of life.

Raja Yoga is the Yoga of the mind while Hatha Yoga is the Yoga of the body. Patanjali believed that no one could control his mind unless he had a sound and healthy body free from disease and ailments. Even ordinary tasks cannot be undertaken successfully by weak and emaciated persons, whereas controlling the mind is an undertaking of great magnitude. It is, therefore, essential that the disciple should perfect his physique by physical exercise (Hatha Yoga), temperance, continence, chastity, etc.

Patanjali has suggested an eight-fold path for Raja Yoga. The eight steps are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhayana and Samadhi.

Yama means abstinence, i.e., refraining from certain acts. They are non-injury, continence, non-greed, truthfulness and non-stealing. Avoid causing injury by deed or word ; abstain from sex or avoid over-indulgence if married; limit the necessities of life to bare minimum; observe truth and non-stealing as moral virtues.

Niyama is observances. What the novice has to observe are purity, contentment, austerity, study and devotion to Divinity. Purity is that of body and mind ; contentment is a state of mind which is free from greed and selfishness ; austerity, is *tapa*—not the mortification of the flesh but austerity of the mind, freedom from the attractions of the world ; study here means study of the ancient scriptures and Devotion to Divinity, means leading a religious life, the mind attuned to Ishvara.

Asana merely means a comfortable body-posture at the time of prayer which does not distract the mind.

Prayanama is Yogic breathing—the three parts of breathing, inhalation, retention and exhalation. There are many exercises related to prayanama. The basic idea is that the control of the breath helps in the control of the mind. It is claimed that prayanama helps the novice to overcome fear, including the fear of death.

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Pratyahara is the detachment of the senses from the objects of sense. It means that the novice learns to control his senses in such a way that his mind is not distracted by outside objects.

Dharana means the concentration of the mind on a single object. This is the beginning of internal Yoga. The novice sits in a bare room and practices one exercise after another with great diligence. The exercises consist of staring without blinking at one spot e.g., a spot on the wall, a candle, the tip of his own nose ; concentrating on an object or an image ; reconstructing an image in the mind, transporting himself to another place, controlling thought process, controlling breathing processes and so on.

Dhayana is a prolonged form of concentration. The practitioner concentrates his attention on something without being distracted by anything. His concentration is so riveted that nothing outside touches him. Concentration, as we all know, is the key to knowledge, the secret of every success—worldly success is achieved by people who concentrate on one object and with a one-track mind accomplish the selected task. Concentration brings success but not happiness. But for the sages, there are certain things which are much more precious than all the riches of the world. They seek inner happiness or spiritual satisfaction and concentration is the first stage of Samadhi which leads to the desired fulfilment.

Samadhi is meditation. It is concentration of the mind to the highest degree. In Dhayana the mind is conscious of the mental activity but in Samadhi mentation is eradicated ; the mind experiences a complete catharis, it gets emptied of all contents. Meditation has nothing to do with the sub-conscious and conscious regions of the mind ; it deals with the supra-conscious region. The devotee is no longer concentrating on an object or abstract idea as in Dhayana but his state is spiritual ; he rises to a world where mind and body do not exist. It is a region of higher consciousness where the Self reunites with the Supreme Reality. In other words, in the Supra-conscious state the soul communes with the Over-soul. Meditation destroys all impurities and the intuitive faculty lying dormant within us expresses itself and it is with its inner light, without any external guide, the soul moves towards the Truth. The Yogi is enveloped in *Anhad*, the soundless sound and the sacred cosmic vibrations fill his whole being. He experiences Infinite Bliss and becomes part of the all-pervading Consciousness. For the duration of the Samadhi, the

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finite and the Infinite are merged together. It may also be added that Samadhi being the highest form of discipline, it strengthens the mind, broadens the vision and lends a deeper understanding of life. It bestows immense powers on the individual.

For us mortals, this is an experience which cannot be described. But here are the words of some of the God-illumined souls who, through the Grace of God, had the good fortune to undergo the mystical experience.

Guru Nanak describes the experience in terms of light shining in the heart or filling the soul :

"He is the soul of all souls. He pervades all vessels. Through the grace of the Guru, the light shone in the heart and effortlessly the soul was absorbed in peace."

"Light fills all souls and that light is He. Through his illumination all get illumined."

Lao Tse wrote about his own experience in the following words :

"I am roused from my body to my true self and emerge from all else and enter myself and behold a marvellous beauty. I lead a supremely good life and become identical with Godhead. Then it is that we are kindled."

Eckhart the Christian mystic wrote :

"I am as certain as that I live, that nothing is so near to me as God."

St. Francis wrote :—

"Suffer me to rejoice in my Lord. I feel so united with Him that I needs must sing."

Shankara wrote :—

"My ego has disappeared, I have realised my identity with the Supreme Spirit. What is this joy that I feel—the joy of mystic realization ? Who shall measure it ? I know nothing but joy, limitless, unbounded."

Bhai Vir Singh, the poet and mystic writes :—

"And thou hast kindled a fire in my heart,
And my dead clay doth blaze up with life,
And every hair of mine doth shine,
With the Soul. Thy Soul, my Beloved.

In the true spirit of Guru Nanak's teachings, Tegh Bahadur,

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eschewing monasticism and asceticism, set himself on the task of self-realisation through *jap*—the repetition of the Divine Name and *tap*—the mystical meditation. Unlike the monks, he was neither initiated by a guru nor introduced to the processes of meditation. As is well-known, in every monastic system, after a period of systematic training, the novice is initiated by the Guru. The disciple, keeping complete fast, spends a night and day in prayer. Many monastic orders prefer to perform the initiation ceremony late at night in a cremation ground with plenty of bodies burning around. The guru sits on a slightly raised ground. With the help of faggots, he lights four fires in four directions at a little distance from himself. He has the fifth fire burning in front of him. The disciple comes after a bath from the river and touching the feet of the guru, he offers his *diksa*, which is usually a tray full of fruits and flowers. With great solemnity the guru chants the prayers, meditates for some time and then imparts the *mantra* to the disciple. He tells the disciple that with the five fires, all his desires and attachments with the world have been burnt and that he is reborn and begins a new life. He offers him *Sanyas* in the form of Ochre robes, which the disciple wears and bare-footed, he sets out to visit all the sacred pilgrim spots in the country.

Mantra, it may be explained, is the sacred formula on a strictly one-to-one relationship. It is not to be divulged to anyone. This spiritual formula is a mantra, which when repeated with full consideration of the meanings of the words and the ideas they embody, serves as an exercise for meditation. The basic idea behind the mantra is "What a man thinks, that he becomes." It is for the guru to decide what mantra to give, e.g., it may be mantra on some personal aspect of the deity or a mantra of the impersonal, monastic absolute. The most revered and highest Yogic mantra is *Om*.

It is obvious that Tegh Bahadur followed an altogether new meditational path. Probably, he accepted and practised the discipline suggested by Patanjali, but it is at the stage of Samadhi that he followed the principles laid by Guru Nanak in terms of *Nam-Simran* and *hukam* and also followed the path of man's ascent to his ultimate goal through the five spiritual regions (*Khands*). He did not seek a guru to impart him instruction about the Yogic practices nor did he receive a *mantra* from

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any guru. All by himself, he stood on the threshhold of a new life in which a new pattern had begun to be woven and each day added something new to the pattern and he could not tell how the pattern would finally work out; there was something frightening about it...exciting, profoundly interesting but frightening too, the frightening quality of the unknown.

Temperamentally, Tegh Bahadur was eminently suited to the world of Yoga ; its two basic needs *Abhyasa* (practice) and *Varagya* (non-attachment) formed part of his mental make up. As a student he had learnt that without *abhyasa* nothing could be mastered ; one couldn't even draw a straight line without practice. Discipline had been nurtured in him and for him, it had become a way of life. The study of scriptures, the art of war and the mastery of music had all demanded strict discipline. And *Vairagya* (non-attachment) was the most pronounced feature of his character all through his life. Even as a child, he was more prone to giving away things rather than hoarding them. Moreover, his life in the underground cell progressively diminished his attachment to the world and its problems. All other Yogic disciplines came in their wake because of the nobility of his character and the determination with which he entered the new phase of his life.

Above all, Tegh Bahadur was fortunate in having a living tradition of *bhakti* in the family and in the leadership of Guru Nanak who had clearly laid down the path of salvation. He had, in no uncertain terms, described the condition of the unregenerated man, who, enmeshed in his egotism, deluded by the transitory glamour of the world and demoralised and degraded by a sinful life was tied to the cycle of transmigration and condemned for ever to endless births and deaths. To escape from this dreadful fate, the only course open to man was to accept the existence of God, who, created the universe, sustains it and manifests Himself through His creation. Man is assisted in perceiving the manifestation of God through the help of the Guru and his own inner voice. To become acceptable to God, man has to rid himself of the dirt and dross of his sinful life and his own egotism which has raised a wall of dualism between him and God. Having cleaned himself of the impurities through various disciplines, man should whole heartedly devote himself to *Nam-Simran*. *Nam-Simran* will set him on the road to salvation

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and step by step, passing through the various spiritual regions and by the grace of God, he will finally reach the region of Truth (Sach Khand) and all his bodily bonds will be destroyed and he will merge into God as water merges into water.

The first prerequisite is belief in the divine existence of God. This belief is not a vague, distant, far-away, customary acceptance: you believe in God not because you have been told that there is a God or that it is a socially-accepted fashion. It is a belief without an element of doubt. At the same time, such a belief has many implications. In Japji four hymns (12th to 15th) are devoted to the mental and spiritual state of the believer. The blissful state of the believer is beyond description and comprehension. The believer alone can comprehend the true nature of the Lord's Name. The believer is endowed with the wisdom and knowledge of the spheres and is untouched by the fear of death. The believer's path is straight ; he does not go astray and he has firm faith in divine laws. Not only the believer himself reaches the door of salvation but he carries his relations and disciples with him. He never has to go abegging. The immaculate name of the Lord is only known to the faithful. Such, according to Guru Nanak, are the virtues of a true believer.

The human mind, however, is soiled by the sins of life. Is there a way to cleanse the mind of the dirt of five human passions, Kam (desire), Krodh (anger), Lobh (covetousness), Moh (attachment) and ahankar (pride) ? Guru Nanak in the twentieth hymn of Japji explains the process by the use of two similes. As hands and feet are washed clean with water and as garments full of grime and dirt are rendered clean with the help of soap, similarly the sin-soiled soul can be purified by submerging itself in the love of the Name. But more than sins, it is man's ego or self-centredness which is the greatest obstacle in the way of man's salvation. In one of the humns of *Asa Di Var*, Guru Nanak explains in great detail the all-pervading influence of *haumai* (ego) on man. Man is born and dies in *haumai* ; the whole activity of his life is centred round *haumai ;* he measures virtue and sin in terms of his haumai and finally his *haumai* ties him to the cycle of transmigration and turns him away from the door of salvation. It is through *Nam-Simran* alone that man can destroy his ego, still the feverish desires of his mind and purify his soul so that he can scale the regions leading to final salvation.

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What is *Nam-Simran ?* Does *Nam* refer to the names of God ? In Adi Granth, God is remembered by many names, such as Khuda, Hari, Ram, Rahim, Karim, Ishvara, Parmeshwar, Sahib, Allaha and so on. These names only signify certain aspects of God. *Nam* represents the totality of God, God the Absolute. The proper form of *Nam* is *Sat-Nam*, His name is Truth. *Sat* is that which cannot be destroyed. All things take birth but finally fade away. *Sat* is neither born nor dies. It is immortal. In *Mul-Mantra*, Guru Nanak describes the one and only God (Ik-Onkar) as *Sat-Nam*. Towards the end of twenty-seventh hymn in Japji, entitled Sodar, Guru Nanak defines Sach (Sat) as the Divine creative energy in the following words :

He alone is the true master, Lord of the Word,
ever the same,
He who made creation is, shall be
and shall ever remain.

Elsewhere in Gavri Raga, he describes *Nam* as the creative force with which all the regions of the universe and all its inhabitants came into being. God having no form was conceived by Guru Nanak as Creative Energy.

It may be added that *Nam* and *Sabad* (Word) are synonymous. Guru Nanak says, "He has neither form, colour or material sign, but He is revealed through the True Word." In this way, *Sabad*, like *Nam* becomes a means of revelation. McLead in *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* makes a slight distinction between *Nam* and *Sabad*. He says "In some cases, there is an implied distinction.... In such cases, the Word appears as the medium of communication and the Name as the object of communication." But finally he accepts that the two terms are identical. He concludes that "The Word embraces all that is Truth, all that expresses the nature of God and the means of attaining Him and this may be perceived in the divine laws governing the universe as well as in the ineffable mystical experience."

It is apparent that *Nam* and *Sabad* are the means of revelation. In other words, they are the subjects of meditation. But before we come to *Nam-Simran* or *Nam-japna*, we might say a few words about the medium through which *Nam* is received by the devotee.

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In Mul Mantra, while defining the concept of God, Guru Nanak describes Him as "The One and Only God, whose name is True, the Creator, the All-prevading, without fear, without hate, Immortal, unborn, Self-existent, Enlightener, gracious. True in the beginning. True in the primeval age. True He is and True He shall be", he ends with the words *Gur Prasad*, which means He is known by Guru's grace. Two new concepts arise out of this definition; that of Guru and that of Grace. Guru has been given a very high place in Sikh religion, as in most Eastern religions. Guru is not a mere teacher or preceptor but a communicator of the Divine truth. He is the guide to the mystical world. In the Bhakti tradition, he is exalted to the state of veneration and often becomes the object of devotion and is worshipped as God. In *Gurbani* we often come across verses in which both the guru and Braham-gyani are treated as God Himself. But there is another aspect of it. Who was the guru of Guru Nanak ? No other than God himself. Guru Nanak realised God through the mystical experience. Ishvara, as conceived by ancient sages, was not bound by time; He was not born and did not die. He did not appear in human form. The sages knew Ishvara through their mystical experiences. Guru Nanak belongs to the Sant tradition. His guru was *Sat Guru* represented by his inner voice; the light that shone within him. He was able to achieve direct communion with God.

But for most people a human guru is absolutely essential. He imparts the Divine Truth to his followers, leads them on the path of salvation and functions as a leader and a guide. The ten gurus of the Sikhs were historical gurus and not the Sat-Guru or the celestial Guru. They never claimed to be God. In fact, Guru Gobind Singh declared that he who calls him God will burn in the fires of hell. About himself he said, "Know that the eternal and incarnate One is my Guru." But the ten gurus were agents of revelation; they were the voice of God. They were true leaders because they were God-anointed souls, who had crossed the mystical regions and had tasted the nectar of immortality. And, then, after the ten gurus, the Adi Granth came to be accepted as the Guru because it contains the Guru's word and serves as the medium of *Nam-Simran*.

The concept of Grace is not easy to understand. Guru Nanak conceived God as a benevolent, merciful and compassionate God.

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Accordingly, to him God was concerned about the salvation of man from the very beginning. As soon as He created the world, He had a plan for the progressive emancipation of man. Guru Nanak believed in the theory of Karma. As you sow, so shall you reap. Karma was responsible for the state of your well-being in this and the next life. Salvation is open to everyone but it is dependent on the actions of each individual. Because of his virtuous deeds an individual may meet the true guru, who would lead him to the door of salvation. But besides the theory of Karma, Guru Nanak believed in God's *Nadar* (Grace), wherein God showers his blessing on the selected few for which no explanation can be given. It is something beyond human comprehension. Sometimes a whole life's devotion remains unrewarded and sometimes God's grace is granted after a moment's fervour or yearning. It is God's gift; the soul is awakened and set on the path of salvation. But in the final analysis, man's efforts are limited; it is through the grace of God that he comes to perceive the Truth or meets an enlightened soul or gets involved in tasks that awakens a yearning within and ultimately, through meditation, he attains union with the ultimate Reality. In the words of Guru Nanak:

Forever worship Him who is the Truth
By His grace you will gain joy everlasting.

Religion for Guru Nanak had nothing much to do with austerities, pilgrimages, rituals and casteism; it is an inner experience and this experience is the outcome of loving devotion of God in terms of *Nam-Simran*. *Nam-Simran* is also the means of cleansing the mind and at the same time, a means of achieving union with God. *Nam-Simran* means remembering the Name and *Nam-Japna* means repeating God's name. We remember people whom we love or for whom we have some regard; by remembering we invoke the memory of those qualities which made them dear to us. By remembering God, we invoke a state of mind which is probably the first stage of meditation. Repeating God's name keeps his memory alive in us though mechanical repetition has no spiritual value. But if we repeat the words with full understanding of their meanings and also evoke the corresponding emotional upsurge, we definitely set ourselves on the path of meditation. Fortunately, in Sikh religion, the gurus have provided us with abundance of *Gurbani*. The *Sadhana* or

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the discipline of *Nam-Simran* begins with the recitation of *Gurbani* (the words of the Guru). Gurbani deals with God, His attributes, His infinite mercy, His love for man, the infinite plurality of His creation, His immanence and the communication that exists between God and man. Recitation of *Gurbani* is a means of bringing man closer to God; it helps him to awaken his inner self; it leads to a mystical experience which gives him a feeling of the presence of God in the depth of his individual being. But *gurbani* has first to be understood and one has to lead a life as advocated by *gurbani* because as Guru Nanak puts it, the vessel (human body) has to be prepared to receive God's Name. The purity of body and mind is the prerequisite for the feeling of devotion invoked by *gurbani*. *Gurbani* can be recited individually and also collectively in the Sangat. When recited collectively, through the process of mass-psychology, it evokes an electrically charged feeling in which one feels the contiguity of God as though He was present among the congregation and for the time being one becomes completely dissociated from the cares and worries of the world. Is it ecstasy ? No, the idea is not to produce an ecstatic feeling. Ecstasy was invoked by the Alvars and Nayanars of the South and the Sufis who sang and danced and through ecstasy sought to feel the presence of God. But among the Sikhs, the collective singing of hymns helps the Sangat to feel and understand the richness of Gurbani and influence the process of thinking of its members and in many cases, change the pattern of their lives. Often it is a short-lived experience but no one can deny that the participants come to feel to a greater or lesser degree, the quivering of the divinity within them.

Essentially the *Sadhana* of loving devotion is an individual activity. Love is the most essential part of devotion. We have all experienced human love and are very much aware of its passions, emotions and its moments of ecstasy. We all know what agony, sorrow and hardship we are willing to suffer for the sake of our beloveds. All over the world, great sagas are sung about love and enchanted we listen to the story of Farhad cutting a mountain for his beloved, Sohini crossing a turbulent river every night to meet her lover, Punnu fighting single-handed for his beloved to the end of his life and Romeo willingly drinking poison at the grave of Juliet. But, at the same time, we are aware that beauty is skin-deep and romance short-lived and soon time and age will wither

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the charm that had bewitched us. But we refuse to learn; such is the mighty passion of love. If the love of man or woman be such a mighty passion, what would be the intensity of God's love which is permanent and indestructible ? God's love comes like the wave of an ocean completely submerging His devotees. God's love is all embracing: the heart and soul of the devotee are submerged in his love. For what is love ? For the lover it means to merge in his beloved so that the two become one. In God's love the devotee meets his beloved. God is love and in that love, there is no place for distinctions or differences. It is the only way to become one with Him.

Guru Nanak demanded that the devotee should "meditate at the ambrosial hour of dawn on the greatness of the true Name". He should through *gurbani* feel the great power of God and stage by stage reach out to Him and through meditation finally merge in Him. *Gurbani* is the medium for singing the praises of God and meditating on His name. As 'Om' was the mystic formula for the Hindus, so is 'Oamkaar' for the Sikhs. A still greater formula is 'Satnam-Wahiguru' because it contains an element of *Visamad* in it, an element of awe and wonder on the greatness of God. *Visamad* is a high stage of meditation where the devotee gets some idea of the great eminence of God. Guru Nanak describes the feeling in the following words in Japji:-

> Infinite His goodness, and the ways of exaltation;
> Infinite His creation and His benefaction;
> Infinite the sights and sounds, infinite His great design,
> Infinite its execution, infinite without confine.

When with deep devotion and sincerity, we meditate on the Name of the Lord, we pass through five stages described in Japji as regions or *Khands* by Guru Nanak. The five *Khands* are Dharam Khand, Gian Khand, Saram Khand, Karam Khand and Sach Khand. Before we describe these regions, it may be mentioned that they have nothing in common with the four stages of spiritual advancement advocated by the Sufis, viz., Shariat, Tariqat, Haqiqat and Marifat. Shariat is the Muslim code of laws laid down by Prophet Mohammad which enjoin upon his followers to offer prayers five times a day, give a certain portion of their income as alms (Zakaat), fast during month of Ramzan and, once in life, go on

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pilgrimage to Mecca. The Quran and Sunnah, between them, prescribe laws that regulate the entire life of the Muslims. The Sufis, however, were not satisfied by the orthodox and formalistic study of Quran and Hadith and their purely ethical and moralistic approach. They yearned for the metaphysical, the supranatural. They emphasised the need of inner disciplines and worked out a Sufi way of life called Tariqat. Sufis were devoted Muslims and believed that Shariat led to Tariqat. The Sufis withdrew from worldly pursuits and lived a solitary life. Shaikh Farid-ud-Din, Ganj-i-Shakar, popularly known as Baba Farid, provides the best example of a Sufi. Farid joined the Khanqab (monastery) of his preceptor Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki and underwent the arduous training of a mystic. He underwent the rigours of penance and fasts and physical tortures involved. He is supposed to have performed even the Chillah-i-makus for forty nights i.e., he was hung by his feet and suspended in a well. He meditated for days without food and lived a life of extreme poverty. From this ascetic way of life, the Sufi disciple passes from the stage of Tariqat (mystical path) to Haqiqat (awakening of soul) through a process of ecstatic singing of the praises of God. He observes silence because he believes that it helps concentration and meditation. He also believes that salvation lies through deep love and intense yearning for God and through meditation and devotion, he attains Marifat (Spiritual knowledge or Realisation). Sufis do not believe in the merging of the finite into the Infinite; the Sufi quest ends with spiritual knowledge (Marifat).

Let us now turn to the five spiritual regions delineated by Guru Nanak in Japji. Guru Nanak's description of these regions lack clarity for two reasons. Firstly, the language of these hymns is highly concentrated; almost every word stands for an idea which has metaphysical associations of its own and has been interpreted differently by different schools of philosophy. Moreover, besides packing ideas as sardines, Guru Nanak, instead of portraying the state of the soul in each region on its way to *Sach Khand*, describes the people who inhabit these regions. The reader has to indirectly restructure the state of the soul in terms of the chief characteristics of the inhabitants of each region. The soul, as it were, during its passage through each region becomes one with the inhabitants and enjoys not only the flavour but the privileges and blessing

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bestowed upon them. Each region is a stage by itself and the soul has to put in extra work in terms of meditation to gain admission to the next higher region. It is a long and hard struggle until the soul reaches the region of Truth and becomes a part of the universal Soul.

It is not proposed to undertake a comprehensive study of the language and contents of each of the five hymns but we hope to present an over-all feature of each region in a simple and lucid manner.

The first region is *Dharam Khand*. Though in the 35th *Pauri* Japji, the definition of *Dharam Khand* is confined only to the first line of the hymn wherein it is described as the region of duty, the 34th hymn provides full details of the region where this duty has to be performed. This physical world of ours is the region of duty and has been given the high title of Dharamsal—the abode of God. Guru Nanak sketches briefly how God created day, night, water, fire and seasons and amidst them, he placed the world with its innumerable types of living beings with different names. This world becomes important because it is the field of man's actions on the basis of which his future is decided by a true and just God. In His court, the virtuous are blessed and rewarded—they are just the people who realise their duty and steadfastly perform it. In this way, life on earth becomes the first stage in the spiritual journey of man. In terms of the cycle of transmigration, human existence provides the one and only chance for achieving salvation. Man must realise this fundamental truth and, on this basis, the true nature of his duty and so perform it in terms of the purity of life and virtuous actions that it leads him to the next stage in the process of spiritual evolution.

The second region is called *Gyan Khand*—the region of knowledge. Guru Nanak tells us that in this region live many deities, such as the deities of water, air and fire, many Krishnas and Shivas and an endless number of Brahmas who create colourful worlds of their own and are capable of changing their own appearances. This region contains many worlds, many suns and moons, many mountains like the Sumair parbat on which many saints like Dhruva go for meditation. Moreover, in this region live many saints, sadhus, jogis, princes and kings and they speak many kinds of languages. All manner of beasts, birds and insects dwell in this region. The region has many silver and gold mines. It is an endless region and, among other things,

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there live many men who sit meditating on the Name of the Lord.

Obviously when the Sadak (seeker) reaches this region, his mental horizon becomes limitless and he becomes conscious of the Infinite creative power of God. In this way he gains knowledge of the ultimate Reality and His creation. It is a region where knowledge reigns supreme and results in providing immense joy to the soul.

The third region is *Saram Khand*—the region of Bliss. *Saram* literally means effort, exertion, rapture, happiness and bliss. The chief characteristic of this region is beauty and elegance. But this consciousness does not pertain to physical beauty but a state of mind in which one perceives divine beauty in all His creation. In this region are fashioned resplendent beauty and innumerable forms of great loveliness. It is not possible to describe them for such an exercise will prove futile. Here mind, reason, intuition and understanding are moulded and also the inner knowledge of the great saints and seers. In other words, the soul gains superhuman power of intuition and understanding and, as a result, experiences a state of peace and bliss in which everything appears beautiful and elegant. Here Truth becomes beautiful and Beauty becomes Truth and both, Truth and Beauty, being the chief characteristics of God, the soul gains consciousness of God in terms of beauty.

The fourth region is *Karam Khand*—the region of Grace. Its chief characteristic is Divine power. This region is the embodiment of Divine power. It is exclusively the abode of the dauntless and mighty heroes whose very being is filled with God. It is through the grace of God that they have gained such power. God's love is woven in their fabric and their beauty and radiance cannot be expressed in words. Those who have God in their hearts can neither be cheated by Maya nor conquered by death. In this region live many bhagats who enjoy a state of bliss becaue they are suffused with the spirit of the True One. In other words, man becomes conscious of his spiritual power, the power that results from the conquest of the mind and the feeling of God within him. The soul, at this stage, gains permanent God-consciousness. God becomes Omnipresent and Immanent.

The fifth and last region is *Sach-Khand*—the region of Truth. This realm of Truth is the abode of God. Though God is present everywhere and in everything, this is the state of the soul where it merges with the Universal Soul. Guru Nanak, as usual,

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describes this region as the place where God lives and bestows His grace and blessings on His devotees, This region, too, contains innumerable worlds, constellations and galaxies which are beyond description. These spheres are full of different kinds of beings and they carry out the tasks assigned to them. The Creator looks at his creation, contemplates upon it and is pleased with it. Guru Nanak says that beyond this, it is extremely difficult to describe the region of Truth.

The soul, at this stage, loses its identity and merges in the Infinite. This merging is the ultimate realisation of the spiritual quest of the human soul. The *Atma* and *Parmatma* become one.

For twelve years (1644-1656) Tegh Bahadur lived the life of a hermit ; for twelve long years, with love and devotion, he meditated on the Name of the Lord in his underground cell. At what stage he attained enlightenment is not known. But that he reached the *Sach-Khand*, the region of Truth, through meditation and *Samadhi* is beyond doubt. His writings give us clear proof that he experienced the merging of the finite into the Infinite. He had a certain image of the perfect man and through sheer effort and supreme will, he attained that ideal in his own person. Such an individual had to attain complete control over his mind so that he was untouched by pain or pleasure or praise or censure ; he had to renounce the pleasures of the world, rise above human passions, regard gold as dust and abjure all attachments. Such a one is blessed by the Lord and he attains a stage of spiritual advancement in which he experiences the merging of his soul with the universal soul as water merges into water. Tegh Bahadur describes the ideal man in one of his hymns :

One who by suffering is unperturbed ;
Not swayed by pleasure, attachment or fear,
Holds gold and dust alike ;
Is free from gratification at praise or pain at censure,
Is above avarice, attachment and conceit ;
Is untouched by pleasure and pain ;
Holds praise and dispraise alike ;
Has renounced lure of the world and covetousness,
And frees himself from all desires,
Abjures lust and wrath—
In the mind of such a one does the Creator dwell.

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By the Grace of the Lord alone does man
Learn this way of life.
Saith Nanak : Such a one is merged into the Lord,
As water into water.

It is a hymn of rare beauty and strength, couched in simple, direct language that rings sharp and clear like the bell of a great cathedral. It is a vision of a great soul that has travelled upward, scaled great heights and overcome immense obstacles. It has won a great battle, conquered all its enemies, laid waste the opposing fortifications and having cast away all the dross and dirt of the world, it stands pure as an angel before the gate of *Sach-Khand* and here, the Lord Himself blesses and accepts it as part of Himself. The soul has finally reached its destination. The hymn describes (Guru) Tegh Bahadur's own spiritual experience when "the Creator came to dwell in his mind" and directed all his future actions.

It is customary among the Yogis to set out on a tour of all the pilgrimage spots of the country after taking *Sanyas* or after enlightenment. The *Sanyasis* wander from one place to another primarily because they do not wish to get attached to any particular place ; the world is their home and they fell at home wherever they go. There may be other reasons such as meeting kindred souls in the *maths* or monasteries that they visit. These meetings provide opportunities to exchange ideas and gain greater knowledge and understanding of different creeds or schools of thought. It widens their vision and adds to their knowledge of the people and places. Wandering in the open country with no set aim produces a sense of freedom ; the *Sanyasi* feels one with the wind and the rain, with the sun and the moon. He goes where his fancy takes him ; there are no curbs or restraints on his movements. There are no chains that bind him to domestic or social commitments. He is answerable to none but his own inner voice. Such wanderings give him a sense of the great life force of the world, the force that flows through all living beings and he feels the tide of life surging through him. And, above all, among valleys and mountains, he finds places where, either because of the beauty of the natural surroundings or because of the great silence that pervades there or a combination of time, place and atmosphere, he feels a peace and calm

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that opens out the soul within him and he feels as though his whole being is filled with divine music. Happiness surges softly through him in waves of light and fragrance.

Tegh Bahadur, too, after he had ended the vigil, felt like leaving his underground cell and going away from Bakala. After these long years of prayers and meditation, the sacred fire burnt brightly within him and he wanted to share its warmth with other people. It is claimed by some writers that Tegh Bahadur undertook this long tour of the Eastern regions of India on the behest of Guru Har Rai. Be that as it may, after Guru Nanak, Tegh Bahadur was the only Guru who undertook such a long journey, covering a period of over seven years to preach and propagate the Sikh faith.

Tegh Bahadur was not a *sanyasi* and he did not go to pilgrimage spots bare-footed and all by himself. His was the creed of a householder and on 9 June, 1656, he set out on this long journey accompanied by Mother Nanaki, his wife Mata Gujri, Kirpal Chand, his brother-in-law, several disciples and a large retinue of attendants. Tegh Bahadur and the leading Sikhs travelled on horses, the ladies in *palkies* and the attendants on foot. The provisions and tents were carried in bullock carts. Unlike the modern age of hurry and divided aims, those were leisurely days and the pilgrimage party travelled by stages and spent some time weeks and some time months at different places. During the rainy season, they did not travel at all.

The first place that Tegh Bahadur and his party visited was Kiratpur, not only because it had become the focal point for the family since Guru Hargobind had shifted there but also because at that time Guru Har Rai was staying there. It was a family reunion after twelve years and naturally the meeting generated a great deal of emotion and excitement. The men met warmly and eagerly, embraced each other vigorously and inquired about each other's health. The women, emotionally charged, shed tears, clutched each others hands and talked in soft whispers. There was so much to learn and a great deal to share. Time flew ; days passed speedily. Guru Har Rai and Tegh Bahadur were closeted together for hours discussing the impending political changes in Delhi and the problems relating to the propagation of the faith among the people. They also discussed the impending tour of Tegh Bahadur and what possibly could be done at

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different places. After a stay of several days, they took leave of Guru Har Rai and loaded with gifts and messages, proceeded on their journey.

The next port of call was Kurukshetra, the place made famous because of the ancient battle fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas and made sacred because it was the birth place of the immortal Bhagvad Gita. Because of its association with history and culture of India, Tegh Bahadur came to like the place and spent some months there. From miles around, the Sikhs came to seek the blessings of Tegh Bahadur. Though he was not the Guru but surely, he was the son of Guru Hargobind and his reputation as a yogi who had spent twelve years meditating at Bakala, had spread far and wide. There was also something compelling about his personality. There was a glow on his face as though fire was burning under his skin and when people noticed this effulgence, they instinctively bowed before him. And yet he was so humble, so benevolent, so kind that they felt that he had specially come to help them and solve their problems. Whatever offerings were made, he either distributed them among the congregation or used them for the benefit of the local people. His saintly presence generated a peaceful and contemplative atmosphere and when he sang the hymns along with the Sangat or recited prayers, the distance between him and the Sangat was obliterated and the audience felt one with him. In an inexplicable way, a weight was lifted from their hearts and they felt lighter and happier and could not resist coming again and again so long he was in Kurukshetra.

It is not always possible to locate the whereabouts of Tegh Bahadur during this long tour. It can be presumed that travelling leisurely from village to village, he broke his journey whenever the *Sangat* or the local Sikhs insisted upon it or whenever a place took his fancy. He was the master of his own time and his main object was to spread the faith of Guru Nanak. According to *Bhat Vahi, Talaunda*, Jind, Tegh Bahadur reached Hardwar on 24 March, 1657. Now this is a long journey, from Kurukshetra to Hardwar but no details are available about the places he visited on the way. Hardwar is an ancient town and has been for ages a well-known centre of Hinduism where saints and sadhus converged from all parts of India. Since times immemorial, the Hindus have been going

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there not only to visit the sacred temples of Hardwar, but mostly to consign the bones of the dead in the river Ganges. It was believed to be a propitious act for the dead. But Hardwar gained importance for the Sikhs because Guru Nanak visited the place and enacted his own little drama to teach people the futility of empty rituals such as offering water to their dead ancestors. Instead of facing the sun while standing half immersed in the water of Ganges, and reciting mantras and offering water to the departed souls, Guru Nanak turned his back to the East and started throwing water to the North. As expected, this attracted a large crowd and the people asked him the purpose of such an act. Innocently, he replied that he was sending that water to his fields at Kartarpur. People roared with laughter. How can your water reach Kartarpur, they asked ? The Guru smiled and said, "If you can presume that the water you offer to the sun would reach your ancestors whose whereabouts you do not know, I can surely transmit water to a field whose direction and location I know." Silence fell over the audience. They understood the meaning of the enactment. Tegh Bahadur spent some months in Hardwar and the surrounding area and revived the memory of Guru Nanak and sought to re-establish Sikh Sangats at various places and re-kindle the flame in the hearts of men.

No records are available about the movements of Tegh Bahadur after his visit to Hardwar. There is a gap of nearly four years until he suddenly appears in Prayag (Allahabad) round about the 19th of April, 1661, as is mentioned in *Bhat Vahi Purbi Dakhni*. Some writers are of the view that from Hardwar, Tegh Bahadur went back to Bakala and some time in 1659 or 1660 came to Prayag via Garh Mukteshwar, Mathura and Agra. But his return to Bakala during 1657 or 1658 is not mentioned anywhere. We can safely presume that these years were spent travelling in different parts of Uttar Pradesh and propagating his faith among the people in that region.

Prayag is situated on the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumuna and the mythical Saraswati and has been considered the most sacred city in India since the Aryan times. Though the present fort and city of Allahabad were built by Akbar in 1583 A.D., it is the site of the Aryan city of Prayag. The Aryans regarded it as a very sacred place because they believed that Brahma

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performed the horse sacrifice here to commemorate his recovery of the four Vedas. It is considered highly meritorious to bathe in the Tribeni and to give alms in Prayag. Hiuen Tsang visited Prayag in 643 A.D. and left behind an excellent description of the town. The Magh Mela, a religious fair of great antiquity, is held every year between the 15th of January and the 15th of February when thousands of pilgrims come to bathe at the Tribeni. Every twelve years, this festival is celebrated as Kumbh Mela when literally millions gather there and bathe at the sacred spot of Tribeni. Such a place was bound to attract an itinerant traveller like Tegh Bahadur because the possibility of meeting like-minded people for exchange of thoughts was immense. Moreover, having come from Agra, where a Sikh Sangat existed since the time of Guru Arjun Dev, Tegh Bahadur was anxious to set up another Sangat at Prayag.

It may be mentioned that the institution of *Sangat* was started by Guru Nanak. It meant a society of the Sikhs or wherever a group of Sikhs collected together, they formed a Sangat. Guru Nanak called such a gathering as *Sat-Sangat* because the main purpose of the group was to sing the praises of the Lord. Starting as *Kirtan* parties, these groups came to study Gurbani where the meaning and purpose of Guru Nanak's faith came to be explained and understood. In course of time, Sangats became centres for the propagation of Sikh faith. Here scriptures were read, Kirtan was performed, religious aims and ideals were discussed and action was taken against social evils. The Sangat made no distinction between the rich and poor and encouraged equality and brotherhood among its members.

Along with the institution of Sangat, Guru Nanak introduced the practice of *Langar* (free kitchen) which not only served to demolish casteism but helped to invoke the ideal of service and started a tradition of joint ventures accomplished through the contribution of all the members of the Sangat. *Langar* became a symbol of the contributory effort of the community. It forged strong links between the members of the social group.

Later when Guru Amar Das set up twenty-two *manjis* (dioceses) and appointed Masands, the basic idea remained the same ; the Masands were to collect contributions from the members of the angats and send the money to the central organisation. As

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explained earlier Guru Ram Dass and Guru Arjan Dev were primarily responsible for establishing a powerful ecclesiastical organisation by raising the city of Amritsar and by building the *Harimandir* there. They consolidated the Masand system and sent out missionaries for preaching the faith and organising new Sangats. During the time of Guru Arjun Dev, Sangats were set up outside Punjab at Kabul, Srinagar, Delhi and Agra. During Guru Hargobind's time, Sangats were established at Patna, Alamganj, Bina and Monghyr. Later when Tegh Bahadur had been anointed as a Guru, he established several Sangats in Bengal and Assam.

After staying for nearly two months at Allahabad and having set up a Sangat at that place, Tegh Bahadur and his party proceeded to Banares (Varanasi) and reached there on 21 June, 1661. Varanasi is one of the seven sacred cities of the Hindus and is famous for its temples, *dharamsalas* and bathing Ghats. Millions of pilgrims visit Varanasi every year and many people believe that those who die in Varanasi, go straight to heaven. Fa Hien visited it in 399 A.D. and Hiuen Tsang in 629 A.D. Hiuen Tsang tells us that at that time there were one hundred Siva temples in Varanasi. Today the temples and Ghats, between them, provide places of worship for most of the major gods and goddesses of the Hindu religion. How long Tegh Bahadur remained in Varanasi is not known but it can be presumed that he spent some months there.

From Varanasi, Tegh Bahadur went to Sahasram. It may be mentioned that the name Sahasram is derived from Arjuna, the place was once known as Sahasra Arjunpura. The place is known for Asoka inscriptions in a cave on a hill rising behind the town. After a short stay at Sahasram, the party proceeded to Gaya. Gaya is famous for the Vishnupad temple but it is Bodh Gaya situated at a distance of seven miles from Gaya, which is the chief attraction for the visitors. The temple at Bodh Gaya, is connected with some very important events of the life of Buddha. It is a temple of great antiquity and was visited by Hiuen Tsang in 635 A.D. Within this temple is the *pipal* tree, known as Bodhi tree, under which Buddha received enlightenment. Who can imagine what thoughts passed through Tegh Bahadur's mind when he went round this temple and, looking back over the centuries, figured out the enlightenment of another great soul. Though his own faith was radically different from Buddhism, there was much in the eight-fold path that must have appealed to Tegh Bahadur. But unlike Buddha, his faith was

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firmly based on the belief in the existence of the Supreme Creative power, *Akal-Pursha,* and he could not conceive of Nirvana except through the loving devotion of God.

At Gaya Tegh Bahadur and his party were received by a devoted Sikh of Guru Hargobind, Bhai Jaithia Seth. It appears that at Gaya, too, a Sikh Sangat had been formed which looked after Tegh Bahadur and his party during their stay in Gaya.

From Gaya Tegh Bahadur and his entourage went to Patna. Patna had a well-established Sikh Sangat and many of the *hukam-namas* of Tegh Bahadur are addressed to this Sangat. Patna is the capital of Bihar and is the most important city of this region. Underneath Patna lies buried the ancient city of Pataliputra which was the capital of the kingdoms of Chandra Gupta, Bindusara and Ashoka. Patna has become a sacred city for the Sikhs because it is the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh. At present it is one of the foremost sacred centres of the Sikh faith.

Tegh Bahadur stayed in Patna for two or three years. During this time he travelled extensively in Bihar. Some authorities are of the view that he went all the way to Dacca and set up Sangats at places like Raj Mahal and Malda. But the whole of this period is shrouded in mystery and it requires extensive research to unearth the real details. It has also been mentioned that Tegh Bahadur set out on his return journey when the news of the death of Guru Har Rai (6th October, 1661) reached him. The only facts about his return journey recorded in *Bhat Vahi Purbi Dakni Khata Barhtian* are that he reached Prayag on the 3rd January, 1663, and Delhi on the 21st March, 1664. It appears that the news of the ascension of Guru Har Rai reached him very late but even then he took his own time to reach Delhi. No doubt travelling with a large party must have been slow and difficult in those far off days but all the same a year and two months seems somewhat long for a journey from Prayag to Delhi. It is felt that the news of the installation of Guru Har Krishen also reached him and he saw no reason to hasten his return to Punjab. At Delhi, Tegh Bahadur learnt that Guru Har Krishen was staying at the residence of Raja Mirza Jai Singh in Raisina. He, along with his family, went to pay their respects and also expressed their deep sense of sorrow at the passing away of Guru Har Rai. After a short stay at Delhi, Tegh Bahadur and his entourage returned to Bakala.

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Guru Tegh Bahadur's life can be neatly divided into three parts; the first period of twenty-three years covers his childhood and early youth ; the second period pertains to twenty years at Bakala, out of which twelve years were given to spiritual quest and eight years to travels in the Eastern region and the last period of eleven years covers his activities as the Guru and pontiff of the Sikh church. The three periods are related to education, meditation and consummation. In the first period he developed his body and mind under the care and guidance of his parents and teachers. In the second period he developed his spiritual powers and felt the presence of God within him and went out to share God's love with other people. In the last phase, without fear or hate, detached from the attachments of the world, calm and serene, he met the forces of evil and destroyed them with his martyrdom. He shattered the chains that bound the human spirit in the prison of fear and set it free to fly heavenward.

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5

The Guru

It was an accepted tradition of the Sikh faith that each Guru had the exclusive authority and the final say in the nomination of his successor. This right could not be challenged by anyone. It was not a hereditary office; no son could claim *gur-gaddi* as a matter of right. Both the selection and nomination was made by the Guru; he could select his son or if it so pleased him, he could select anyone outside the family. The age of the successor was not considered of any consequence; the Guru could nominate an aged person, a young man or even a child. Each successive Guru of the Sikh faith nominated his successor and once nominated, the new Guru was accepted by the followers as the Supreme religious leader and the final authority in all matters pertaining to every aspect of life.

But this does not mean that there were no other claimants to the throne or that there were no bickerings, no amily feuds, no disgruntled persons. It is sad but true that the families of the Gurus were not above power-politics; there were rivalries, feuds, bitterness and jealousy as elsewhere. When Guru Nanak nominated Guru Angad as his successor, his two sons Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das were deeply disappointed. Guru Angad's son Datu would not forgive his father for nominating Guru Amar Das and went to the extent of attacking the Guru. Bibi Bhani conspired to see that her husband (Guru) Ram Das was nominated by her father. When Guru Ram Das nominated his second son Arjun Dev as Guru, Prithi Chand became the bitterest enemy of the Guru and went to the extent of conspiring to kill his son, the future Guru Hargobind, by poison or snake bite. Having lost all hope of becoming the Guru, he was willing to stoop to the

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meanest trick to have his son Meharban ascend the throne. And when Guru Hargobind nominated his grandson Har Rai (the second son of Baba Gurditta) in preference to his elder brother Dhirmal, the latter continued to conspire and fight all his life against both Guru Harkrishen and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Moreover, when Guru Har Rai nominated his younger son, Harkrishen as the Guru in preference to his elder son Ram Rai, the latter was so infuriated that he approached Emperor Aurangzeb to dethrone his younger brother and to issue orders in his favour. In short each Guru had to face collateral rivalry and sometimes political interference. Moreover, each succeeding Guru had to cope with the legacy of domestic and political feuds inherited from his predecessor.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's case was unique. His nomination was clouded in mystery and he had also to face the enmity of Aurangzeb because of the assistance rendered by Guru Har Rai to Dara Shikoh. To understand the situation in which Tegh Bahadur found himself when he came to be anointed as the Guru, it is necessary to trace briefly the developments during the twenty years he remained in seclusion at Bakala, more or less dissociated from Sikh politics.

Guru Har Rai was fourteen years old when he ascended the *Gur-gaddi* (1644). He was a young man of mild disposition, gentle, kind, courteous. Though he continued to maintain an army of more than two thousand soldiers, it was meant primarily for defensive purposes. Temperamentally, he was not a soldier and he had no intention of getting involved in any kind of feuds with the Mughals or the hill Rajas. He saw to it that cordial relations were maintained with the Central Government at Agra and the Governor at Lahore. Though he pontificated for sixteen years, and lived in the style of a semi-independent feudal prince, he devoted all his time and energy to peaceful tasks. His main interest was to extend the area of Sikh faith and to establish new Sangats in different parts of the country. For this purpose, he sent out missionaries to different places and himself undertook tours in Malwa and Majha regions of the Punjab. It is alleged that because of his gentle disposition, the Masand system deteriorated during his reign. Many Masands stopped sending contributions to the Guru and set themselves up as independent leaders of the community. Moreover, at some places members of the

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Sodhi family began to act as local gurus, particularly Dhirmal at Kartarpur and Meherban and later, his son Harji, at Amritsar. The Guru sent out emissaries to persuade the Masands to mend their ways but took no serious action against them. For the purpose of propagating the faith, he began to rely more on the Udasis and their institutions of Bakhshishes (bounties) and Dhuans (hearths). So far as the pseudo-gurus were concerned, he just ignored them and was sure that they could not last long and would be exposed by their own malpractices. In his own kind and gentle ways, he attracted thousands when he went on tours and made it possible for the Sangats to differentiate between the true and false gurus. For himself, he sought nothing; wherever he went, he showered gifts and blessings on the people. It was through his blessings that some humble persons rose to become Rajas of Patiala, Jind and Nabha. Even though Guru Har Rai lacked the martial spirit and the commanding personality of his grandfather or the organisational and poetical gifts of his great grandfather, yet it was the same celestial fire that burnt within him and naturally, those who came in touch with him, felt the warmth and glow of spiritual powers. What, after all, is the test of a true guru? It is simply this that his very presence generates an atmosphere, in which the weight and weariness of the world is cast off, the mind ceases its endless wanderings and is filled with peace and the individual feels the urge to devote his life to nobler tasks. This is exactly what people experienced when they joined him in his prayer meetings.

On the diplomatic plane, Guru Har Rai maintained cordial relations with Dara Shikoh, who was the Governor of Punjab at that time. Dara Shikoh was a most unusual Mughal prince of his times. Unlike other princes who were inordinately ambitious and ruthless in their lust for power and, despite their fondness for wine and women, always presented themselves publicly as deeply religious and passionate defenders of Islam, Dara Shikoh was a man of liberal views and openly expressed his interest in other religions. Like Akbar, he invited scholars and divines of other religions and discussed with them the different facets of their religion. He was essentially a Sufi and was not satisfied with the mere observance of Shariat laws. He wanted to learn something about the deeper religious experiences, something beyond rites and rituals. His interest in Hinduism was evident from the

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fact that he arranged for the translations of Atharva Veda and the Upanishads in Persian. It is but natural that Dara was popular among the Hindus but was disliked by the Muslim divines and Ulemas, who, jealously guarding their position and privileges, were ever-ready to prosecute infidels and the so-called non-believers. Dara developed a close friendship with Guru Har Rai and often came to exchange thoughts on spiritual and religious matters with him. In 1648, when Dara fell ill, it was the medicine sent by Guru Har Rai, that cured him. This brought the two men closer and they felt genuinely happy whenever they had an opportunity to get together. With such warm and friendly relations with the Governor of the province, the first fourteen years of Guru Har Rai's reign passed peacefully and he utilised this time for the welfare of his people and the propagation of his faith.

In 1657, Shah Jahan fell seriously ill and, believing that his end was near, he executed his will and bequeathed the Empire to the heir-apparent, Dara Shikoh. But the emperor's decision was not acceptable to his other three sons, Shuja, Aurangzeb and Murad. They, like Dara, were mature and experienced princes and had been governors of provinces and had fought many wars and could claim considerable followings. They rebelled and decided to settle the issue by the power of the sword.

As things stood, Dara, was in a better position compared to his brothers. He had been proclaimed as the Emperor and had a large body of imperial troops under him. He was in Agra by the side of his ailing father and could use the prestige of Shah Jahan to win over the loyalty of the powerful courtiers and commanders of the forces. He was in such a strong position that if he had played his cards well, he would surely have won. But unfortunately he was neither an astute diplomat nor a seasoned general. He was over-confident of his position and did not muster all his forces and build up the defences necessary to defeat his enemies. He was essentially a scholar and a philosopher and had little knowledge of the logistics of war.

Murad, who was the Governor of Gujarat, was the first to raise the banner of rebellion. He declared himself Emperor and struck coins in his name. Murad was a man of care-free and genial temperament and his weakness was wine. He lacked the qualities of leadership and the political craftiness so necessary at the time of crisis.

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Shuja, who was Governor of Bengal, collected a large army and set out for Agra with the object of forcibly occupying the throne. Shuja was a good soldier and a capable administrator but he was not sufficiently tough, aggressive and vigilant. He loved wine, women and easy life. Shuja's adventure was short lived. Dara sent the imperial forces under Raja Jai Singh of Amber and his own eldest son Sulaiman Shikoh to deal with Shuja. The two armies met near Banaras and fought a bitter battle. Shuja was defeated and fled toward Bengal pursued by the imperial forces.

Aurangzeb was the Governor of Dakhan. He was the shrewdest of all the brothers. He was a man of iron will, strong determination, indefatigable energy and industry and was bold and cunning in war and diplomacy. He persuaded Murad to join him against Dara and promised that, in the event of victory, the Empire would be divided between them and Punjab, Afganistan Kashmir and Sind would be Murad's share. The two brothers joined their forces and defeated the imperial troops near Dharmat. Emboldened by the victory, they headed for Agra. Dara hastily collected as many troops as he could and personally led the forces to fight the battle outside Agra. Aurangzeb's military strategy and bold tactics and the fortunes of war helped him to win the battle. Dara escaped with a handful of soldiers and fled to Punjab.

Aurangzeb captured the fort of Agra, imprisoned his father Shah Jahan in the fort and proceeded to Delhi. On the way to Delhi, Aurangzeb invited Murad to dine with him and during the dinner made him drink a lot of wine. While Murad lay in drunken stupor, he was treacherously disarmed by a maid servant and taken prisoner by Aurangzeb. Poor Murad, who dreamt of sharing the Empire with Aurangzeb, soon found himself a prisoner in the Delhi fort. After some time, under the orders of Aurangzeb, he was executed.

On his way to Lahore, Dara met Guru Har Rai and sought his assistance. Because of the longstanding friendship between them, Guru Har Rai felt obliged to help him. He was fully conscious that diplomatically, it was a dangerous move but on the basis of personal relationship, he could not turn his back to his friends. The Guru's resources were limited but all the same, he ordered his troops to delay the crossing of the Beas river by the forces of

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Aurangzeb who were pursuing Dara. Dara could not raise sufficient forces in Punjab and fled to Gujarat and through the assistance of a friendly Governor in Ahmedabad raised a reasonably big army and turned to Ajmer. At the pass of Deorai, he was again defeated. The second drubbing completely shattered his spirit and he decided to fly to Afghanistan. On his way, he stayed with a Baluchi Chief, Malik Jiwan, who betrayed him and handed him over to Aurangzeb's forces as a prisoner. Aurangzeb had him attired in dirty robes and paraded him in Delhi riding an equally dirty elephant. People cried to see the humiliation of their beloved prince. He was tried by the Ulemas, who condemned him for apostacy and as a result, he was beheaded. His eldest son Sulaiman Shikoh was killed by slow poisoning. Aurangzeb became the unchallenged ruler of the Empire and ordered that, one by one, all the near and distant claimants to the throne should be put to death.

Aurangzeb was not the one to forget the assistance that Guru Har Rai had given to Dara Shikoh. Before we deal with the action Aurangzeb took against the Guru, it would be worthwhile to have a close look at the Emperor who was the absolute ruler of India during the time of the last four Gurus of the Sikh faith.

From a narrow, conventional viewpoint, Aurangzeb was a highly religious Musalman. He consistently prayed five times a day, observed fast during the Ramzan, supported charitable institutions, did not have more than four wives at a time and in all other ways followed the Quranic laws of Shariat. He was a man of simple and frugal habits: dressed simply, ate sparingly and never touched wine. He had a scholarly bent of mind and studied many languages. He was diligent, hard-working and industrious. Both in diplomacy and the art of war, he was a past master. He was shrewd and watchful and extremely ambitious.

Politically he had but one goal; to turn India into an Islamic State. In other words, his political vision was distorted by religious prejudices. This was the primary cause of his failure. He failed to visualise the impossibility of converting by force all the Hindus of India into Musalmans. His religious policy certainly gained him the popularity of his subjects belonging to his own faith but turned the vast majority of Hindu population disloyal, disgruntled and rebellious. Instead of winning over his snbjects, he antagonised

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them and all through his life, he had to fight against a strong current of opposition.

From the religious viewpoint, he was an extremely narrow-minded person. He deemed it as his duty to convert the *Kafirs* and destroy Hindu temples and other places of worship. He issued a general order, "to demolish all the schools and temples of the infidels and to put down their teachings and practices." So large was the number of officers engaged in this task that he was obliged to appoint a 'Director-General' to supervise their work. What is worse, he defiled many temples and gained the implacable hatred of non-Muslims. He imposed Jazia or poll-tax on all the "unbelievers" and also restricted the area of their trade and commerce. He dismissed a large number of Hindus from government service and replaced them by Muslims or converts. By his religious zeal he not only alienated the Hindus but made them conform more tenaciously to their faith, which to them was older, nobler and richer than the new faith offered by Aurangzeb. His religious policy was responsible for one rebellion after another and he wasted the best years of his life fighting against rebels.

Arts, during his regime, touched the lowest ebb. He banned music, dancing and painting and even the art of architecture, of which his ancestors were so proud, languished during his time.

He was a hard-hearted man. He killed all his brothers and imprisoned his father. At one time, he stopped the flow of Jamuna water into the Agra fort. The wells in the fort had brackish water. His father Shah Jahan wrote to him, "The Hindus offer water to their ancestors. What kind of a Musalman are you that you deny water to your living father?" Aurangzeb wrote back to say, "You have brought it on yourself." So suspicious was Aurangzeb that he imprisoned three of his sons, one of them died in prison and another was released after eight years of humiliating imprisonment. He also imprisoned his daughter Zeb-un-nisa.

Whenever Puritanism's, orthodoxy and fanaticism get together, they produce the worst kind of devils and they become the curse of their times. Such was Aurangzeb; his inside was dark with hatred and he enjoyed not a moment of peace in his life. Like a pack of wolves, his enemies, the Jats, the Rajputs, the Marathas and the Sikhs attacked and harassed him and he spent his whole life waging wars against them. Unwittingly, he himself was the

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cause of the fall of the Mughal Empire, to the preservation and protection of which he devoted all his life. Only when his end was near, did he realise that he had been a complete failure. In one of his letters to his son, A'zam, he wrote, "I came alone and I am going alone. I have not done well to the country and the people and of the future, there is no hope." His old age was sad, weary and disillusioned and he died unhonoured and unsung.

As stated earlier, Aurangzeb, after he had disposed off all his rivals, turned his attention to those who had helped Dara during the battle of succession. He summoned Guru Har Rai to Delhi. Guru Har Rai thought it unwise to personally go to Delhi. He knew fully well what would happen there. The Mughal authorities had worked out a simple but very effective formula for dealing with the divines, saints and religious leaders of non-Muslims. It is a pity that the authorities never thought of applying the same formula to test the spiritual powers of their own Ulemas, pirs and fakirs. The non-Muslim divines were asked to perform miracles to prove their spiritual powers and in case they could or would not do so, they were given the choice of embracing Islam or being executed. Guru Har Rai had no intension of putting himself in that precarious situation. He knew fully well that all these conditions were utterly unacceptable to him. The Sikh faith did not permit the performance of miracles and death would be infinitely more attractive than the denunciation of one's faith. Guru Har Rai wrote back to Aurangzeb to the effect that as he himself was devoted to the life of prayer and meditation, he had little to do with princes and politics and, therefore, he was sending his son Ram Rai who would answer any question or resolve any doubts the Emperor might have. So Ram Rai went to Delhi, where Aurangzeb kept him as a hostage but no harm was done to him.

Ram Rai was a handsome and charming young man fully conversant with the way of the world and the etiquette required at the court. He completely won over Aurangzeb and his courtiers with his politeness, ready wit and exposition of Sikh scriptures. He probably possessed considerable occult powers and it is claimed that he performed many miracles in the court. He was obviously a worldly wise man and knew how to get on with princes and politicians. But the court Qazis and Ulemas were always looking for opportunities to humiliate him. At last they got their chance when they asked him to explain the meaning of

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the following couplet in the Adi Granth which apparently seemed to denigrate the Muslims.

> "The dust of the Musalmans is turned into potter's clay,
> Vessels and brick are fashioned from it,
> When put in fire, it cries in agony."

Ram Rai found himself in a very tight situation and did not know how to get out of it. For once he lost his nerve and committed the gravest fault of his life. He said that the scribe had made a mistake in writing the verse and instead of writing word 'Beiman' (faithless), he had written 'Musalman'. The Emperor and courtiers were pleased but when the news of this grave heresy, this deliberate distortion of the sacred text, reached Guru Har Rai, he forthwith disinherited Ram Rai and sent him word that he should stay where he was and should never come back home because there was no place for him.

Before his death in 1661, Guru Har Rai bestowed the apostolic succession on his younger son Harkrishen in the presence of the leading Sikhs and performed the usual ceremony connected with it. Guru Harkrishen was only five years old when the Guruship was conferred upon him.

When Ram Rai learnt that his younger brother Harkrishen had been installed as the Guru, he was very angry and extremely upset. He had all along assumed that being the eldest son of Guru Har Rai, he was the rightful heir and would, in the course of time, be nominated as the next Guru. He felt that by this disinheritance, his father had done the greatest injustice to him. He refused to accept the decision and set himself up as a Guru at Dehra Dun and collected a number of Masands to espouse his cause among the Sangats at various places and also to collect donations for him. He felt terribly frustrated. When the leading Sikhs at Kiratpur refused to accept his leadership, he decided to use his influence at the Court. He submitted a petition to the Emperor in which he sought Aurangzeb's assistance for the redress of his grievances and for the confirmation of the title of Guruship on him and also for the restoration of the family property to him. Aurangzeb, always too happy to encourage family feuds and following the policy of divide and rule, entertained the petition and ordered that Guru Harkrishen should present himself at his

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court so that the Emperor, after hearing the arguments of both the parties, could arrive at a just decision. He assigned the task of arranging the Guru's presence at Delhi to Raja Jai Singh of Ambar and also asked him to look after the Guru during his stay there.

The news of Aurangzeb's decision caused considerable consternation and dismay among the Guru's followers at Kiratpur. They were particularly concerned about the safety of the infant Guru. They would not trust the Emperor. Raja Jai Singh, however, sent his emissaries to explain that the Emperor intended no harm to the Guru and that he was only interested in settling the inheritance issue. It was also pointed out that Raja Jai Singh was himself to play the host to the Guru and would look after his safety and comfort during his stay at Delhi.

With the fears allayed to some extent, Guru Harkrishen left for Delhi escorted by the soldiers of Raja Jai Singh and followed by some of the leading disciples of the Guru. At Delhi the Guru was received with due honour and courtesy by Raja Jai Singh himself and was lodged in a bungalow where now stands the edifice of a magnificent and elegant Gurdwara known as Bangla Sahib.

At Delhi, Guru Harkrishen made no move to meet the Emperor. The Emperor himself did not press for it. Either he was too busy with more important state affairs or he had been convinced by Raja Jai Singh that it would serve no purpose to invite the infant Guru to the court. May be Aurangzeb felt the futility of interfering in a matter concerning the apostolic succession which was beyond the purview of the State. Moreover, three years had already passed since the Guru's installation and it was evident from the large gathering of the Sikhs who came to pay their homage to the Guru every day, that he had been accepted as the Guru by the whole community. Aurangzeb was also aware that the leading Sikhs had totally rejected the claim of Ram Rai and any interference at this stage would serve no useful purpose. Aurangzeb finally decided to confirm the Guruship on Guru Harkrishen. To assuage the feelings of Ram Rai, the Emperor conferred a large jagir on him. Politically, it suited Aurangzeb because, by this move, he had set up the two brothers, in opposite camps.

It was at this time that Tegh Bahadur returned from his Eastern tour and reached Delhi on 21 March, 1664. It was at Delhi

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that he paid his respects to Guru Harkrishen while the Guru was staying at the bungalow which had been placed at his disposal by Raja Jai Singh. After staying for a couple of days at the Dharamsala of Bhai Kalayana, Tegh Bahadur returned to Bakala.

Guru Harkrishen continued to stay at Delhi. During his stay a virulent epidemic of small-pox was raging in and around the city. His tender heart melted when he saw the afflicted people. He ordered his followers to set up camps for all the suffering people who were helpless and unattended and arrange for food and medical supplies. He himself went about visiting various centres and administered to the needs of the patients. In this humanitarian task, he himself contracted small-pox and after a short illness, he breathed his last on the 30th March, 1661. He was cremated at the bank of Jamuna and the spot has been sanctified by a Gurdwara known as Bala Sahib.

Before his deaths, after a spell of unconsciousness, Guru Harkrishen opened his eyes and asked his followers to bring a coconut and five paise. In a symbolic way, he performed the ceremony of the installation of the next Guru by waving his hand thrice round the coconut and uttered the words "Baba Bakala". He was conscious of the importance of the final task he had to perform because it assured the continuity of the line of succession. He had to pass on the heritage to the chosen one who was to carry on the mission as the leader of the Sikh Brotherhood. The meaning of the last two words uttered by Guru Harkrishen was unambiguous and explicit. There was only one 'Baba' at Bakala at that time and that was Tegh Bahadur. Moreover Tegh Bahadur had met Guru Harkrishen only a few days earlier and had told him that he was going back to Bakala. But since the words referred to a place and not to a person, it created a dramatic situation which had to be resolved before Tegh Bahadur could be installed as the Guru of the Sikh community.

Though the two words, "Baba Bakala", laconic and unambiguous, might have made sense to the few Sikhs collected round the death bed of Guru Harkrishen but for the majority of the Sikhs, they were like the mysterious utterances of the oracle of Delphi. Many Sikhs were aware that Tegh Bahadur lived at Bakala but his nomination appeared altogether unusual to them. Here was a Guru nominating his grandfather's brother as his successor, something utterly unprecedented and uncommon.

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Many Sangats sent their representatives to Bakala to make discreet enquiries on the spot. Many people thought it worthwhile to go to Bakala and see things for themselves.

The piquant situation was further complicated by the fact that the Guru's companions and followers, who were present at the time of Guru Harkrishen's death, were not sufficiently alive to the need of communicating the news about the nomination to the Sangats at different centres. Even Bhai Dargah Mal, who was given the coconut and the five paise, did not take them expeditiously to Bakala and arrange for the installation of Tegh Bahadur on the *gur-gaddi*. He took more than four months to reach Bakala.

The intervening period came as a boon to the imposters. The two words had spread like wild fire among all the hopefuls of the Sodhi tribe. Since the time of Guru Ram Das, the choice of the Guru had been restricted to the Sodhi caste and the result was that as many as twenty-two "Sodhi" claimants of the throne set up "Shops" or "manjis", as they were called, at Bakala and collected enough Masands around them to propagate that they were the true and rightful gurus. The little town of Bakala wore the garments of a festive occasion. Tents and colourful Shamianas were rigged up; the gurus, dressed in silks and brocades, sat on raised platforms and the devotees were ushered in to pay homage and receive blessings. The Masands were feverishly busy in collecting donations. For most people the situation was indeed confusing. There were twenty-two gurus and they found it difficult to separate grain from the chaff. And the most aggressive and vociferous claimant among them was Dhir Mal, the grandson of Baba Gurditta. His followers were well organised. Some of them wore arms and the others were disciplined and well-trained workers who knew how to deal with Sangats, organise Kirtan and conduct *langars*. Their propaganda was also more forceful and direct; they claimed Dhir Mal's superiority over other claimants on the basis of his heredity and more so on his possession of the copy of Adi Granth. They coerced, cajoled and compelled many people to accept Dhir Mal as the Guru.

The one person in Bakala, who was altogether unconcerned about the tumultuous drama being enacted in the town, was Tegh Bahadur. He spent most of his time in the underground cell, meditating on the Name of the Lord and occasionally went out

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riding or for long walks with Bhai Mehra. He remained calm, indifferent and aloof. His mother, Nanaki fretted and argued with him. She stressed the need of his announcing himself as the Guru and thereby ending the confusion that prevailed among the followers. She insisted that he was the rightful heir and he should assert his authority. It was his duty to take over the stewardship of the community and guide its future course of action. But Tegh Bahadur just smiled and kept silent. Mother Nanaki had, however, no intention to let matters go out of hand; she decided to act firmly and speedily. She had watched the antics of Dhir Mal and the rest of the motley crowd in the market place singing paeans of self-praise and scurrying from place to place. Twenty years earlier she had pleaded Tegh Bahadur's case before her husband, Guru Hargobind, but now that the issue had been decided by Guru Harkrishen, she would not permit anyone to deprive him of his rightful claim. She decided to collect the leading Sikhs and place the issue before them. She sent for the two prominent Sikhs at Amritsar, Bhai Dwarka Das and Bhai Gariba, who commanded great respect among the people. She also sent messages to Sikhs at other missionary centres. It so happened that Diwan Dargha Mal, accompanied by some of leaders of the Sangat at Delhi, reached Bakala at that time. Within a few days several leading Sikhs collected in Bakala. Meetings were held, ideas were exchanged and they came to the conclusion that the installation ceremony of Guru Tegh Bahadur should be performed without any further delay. They approached Tegh Bahadur and informed him about the wishes of Guru Harkrishen and their own decision. Accordingly on the 11th August, 1664, at a special diwan arranged for the purpose, in the presence of a large Sangat, the usual ceremonies were performed and the spiritual regalia was presented to him by Diwan Dargha Mal. The Saffron mark (Tikka ceremony) on Guru Tegh Bahadur's forehead was affixed by Baba Gurditta, grandson of Baba Buddha and he was declared the apostolic head of the Sikh faith.

After the ceremony, some of the imposters in the market place melted into thin air except Dhir Mal and a few others who refused to accept the decision of the congregation. Dhir Mal, in particular, fumed and fretted and openly declared his enmity to Guru Tegh Bahadur and set about hatching a conspiracy to kill him.

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But Dhir Mal's plans were thwarted by the arrival of a most remarkable man, Makhan Shah Lubana of the Banjara tribe. Lubanas, it may be explained, were originally Rajputs who turned free-booters and mercenary soldiers for want of a kingdom of their own. They were adventurers, roaming all over the country and accepting gainful employment whenever opportunity offered itself. In course of time, many of them took to trade, particularly trade that involved a great deal of travelling. As a community of traders, they owned large number of horses, oxens, bulls, carts and carriages and moved about in stately caravans. They were rich merchant princes and rode on horses or travelled in carriages in great style. Whenever two Lubana caravans met travelling in different directions, the leaders exchanged princely gifts such as strings of pearls or of other precious stones and lavishly entertained each other. With the advent of Muslims many of them were converted and became Musalmans. During Guru Nanak's time, many of them became Sikhs and were known for their zeal and orthodoxy. During the Mughal times, Lubanas mostly worked as army contractors, supplying food and grain to the armies both in peace and war time. Their caravans followed the armies wherever they went. They maintained well-trained and fully armed guards for the protection of their caravans and could easily defend themselves against dacoits and thugs on the highways.

So far as the term "Lubana" is concerned, two altogether different meanings are assigned to it. According to one tradition, the word 'Lubana' is composed of two parts, *loh* (iron) and *ban* (arrow) and therefore relates to the lubana Rajput ancestors who fought with bows and arrows and submitted to no external authority. According to Sir Danzil Ibbeston, the term lubana is derived from *lun* (salt) and *bana* (trade) and it refers to lubanas who were well-known as salt traders. And the term Banjara in Mughal times meant travelling grain merchant but essentially it was the name of a caste common among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

Makhan Shah Lubana was a devout Sikh. He was born at Swaran Nagar in 1619 A.D. This town is located on the Narbada river. He was a very rich merchant of Gujarat and traded on land and sea. He came to Bakala because of an unusual experience he had recently undergone. Some time back he was bringing a great deal of merchandise from the Middle Eastern countries in one of

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his ships and was overtaken by a furious storm in the Arabian Sea. The winds tore away the sails and the ship tossed rudderless on an open turbulent sea. Makhan Shah ran from one part of the ship to the other shouting orders and urging his men to hold on to the ship at all costs. But there appeared little hope; the fury of the sea remained unabated. One after another, the mountainous waves rolled over the decks. Exhausted, Makhan Shah fell on his knees and prayed to Sat Guru to save him and promised that if he safely touched the land, he would make an offering of five hundred *mohars* (golden coins) to his Guru. It appears that his prayers were heard and, in a short time, the sea became calm and the winds gentle and the ship headed safely for the shore. When his ship touched the western coast of Gujrat, he alighted and made arrangements for a speedy journey to Delhi. On reaching Delhi, he learnt about the passing away of Guru Harkrishen and also heard the rumours that the next Guru was to be discovered in Bakala.

At Bakala, Makhan Shah found a mushroom of self-appointed gurus in the market place and each one claimed to be the rightful guru. He was amused and perplexed at the same time. His caravan, his magnificent tent, his arm guards and his own princely bearing attracted all the hired Masands and one-and-all, they pleaded the cause of their gurus and tried to pursuade him to visit them. He was no milk-sucking infant; he had seen the world and was a shrewd judge of men. He had to make his promised offering but he was bent upon discovering the true guru. He thought of a strategam. He would visit all the gurus, one by one and instead of making the stipulated offering of five hundred *mohars*, he will offer five mohars to each one of them. The true guru, he thought, would certainly claim the full amount. So, accompanied by a couple of body-guards, he rode on a horse and went to the market place. He alighted from his horse and leaving the horse with his servants, he went to each tent wherein sat the imposters surrounded by their sycophants. He was received with great show of courtesy at the entrance of each tent and was ushered in. He went in, bowed and placed five mohars before each guru. They were delighted, pocketed the money, blessed him and advised him to come again. Not one of them demanded any more money. Makhan Shah was disappointed. On enquiry, he learnt that there was one more guru, who lived in his own house, met his followers

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in the evening when the congregation collected for prayer but spent most mornings in a cell, meditating all by himself. After some hesitation, Makhan Shah decided to visit the guru in his cell. With the utmost care, he softly opened the door and then stepped in. He found the guru, with eyes closed, seated in the state of Samadhi. He bowed and touched the floor with his forehead and placed five *mohars* before him. There was complete silence: he kept sitting, watching and waiting for the guru to open his eyes. At last the Samadhi ended and gaining consciousness of the visible world, the Guru looked at Makhan Shah for a moment and then noticed the five golden mohars lying on the drugget before him. A warm and benign smile flickered on his face and he said, "So you have come. God bless you. Is that your offering ? It is unbecoming for a true Sikh to promise five hundred mohars and offer only five."

Makhan Shah fell at the Guru's feet and with tears of joy and a feeling of fulfilment, he spoke in a husky, emotionally charged voice, "O, my Master, I have sought you everywhere. Why have you been hiding yourself ? Pray, come out and lead your followers otherwise they will go astray and become the victims of all the imposters outside."

He emptied his purse and went out shouting, "I have found the True One, I have found the True Guru." A large crowd collected in front of the house. Makhan Shah narrated the whole story and the way he had found the true Guru. They all went and bowed before Guru Tegh Bahadur. The news spread like wild fire and at the evening prayer meeting, a large crowd collected. After the prayer, Makhan Shah addressed the audience and said, "All doubts have been resolved. We have found the true Guru. Henceforth, we will seek his blessings and I have no doubt that all our desires will be fulfilled and all our dreams will come true. If you have faith in him in the hour of peril, he will come to your assistance as he came to mine." The audience was deeply impressed and bowed before the Guru.

Next morning, Makhan Shah brought many more offerings and placed them at the Guru's feet. Personally, he felt so happy and contented that for some months, he attached himself to the Guru and felt proud to do whatever service he could render. A strange happiness filled his being and he felt as though he had found something that he had been seeking all his life. He felt

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rich beyond measure; he needed nothing more. He had reached the summit.

Makhan Shah's propaganda worked like a magic wand and all the imposters disappeared except Dhir Mal. Dhir Mal was a hard boiled, embittered man, who was unlikely to accept defeat so easily. Deep down in his heart, he felt that he was the rightful claimant being the elder brother of Guru Har Rai and Guru Tegh Bahadur, who had been ignored by Guru Hargobind, could not be installed as Guru at this stage. Furious and restless, he collected his men and instigated by his leading Masand, Shihan, decided to kill Guru Tegh Bahadur. He thought that it was the only way to achieve his objective. With the help of Shihan, he collected a lot of weapons and a gang of ruffians who would be too happy to join the fray. In consultation with Shihan and the gang leaders, Dhir Mal decided that the best time to attack the Guru would be soon after the mid-day meal when Makhan Shah and his men had returned to their camp for the afternoon nap and the Guru and his family were likely to have only a handful of attendants at the house. One afternoon Dhir Mal, Shihan and the whole gang of ruffians attacked the Guru's house. Hearing the violent commotion, the Guru came outside the house and Shihan, who was standing on the balcony of the opposite house, fired point blank at the Guru. The bullet only grazed the Guru's forehead and did not do much harm. Shihan thought he had killed the Guru. In the confusion caused by the unexpected attack, the ruffians ransacked the Guru's house and besides much else, carried away all the valuable presents brought by Makhan Shah.

When the news of the attack spread among the people, a vehement wave of anger rose against Dhir Mal. In the meantime, when Makhan Shah learnt about the dastardly attack on the Guru, he, along with his men, rushed to the Guru's house but by that time, Dhir Mal and his gang had returned to their camp. Makhan Shah made sure that the Guru was safe and his wound had been properly bandaged and all others, who had been injured in the fight were being properly attended to. After paying his obeisance to the Guru, he hastily mustered his men and weapons and planned an attack on Dhir Mal's camp. It turned out to be a tame affair. The ruffians were no match against the well-armed, trained men of Makhan Shah. They swooped down on the camp and captured the ring leaders, Dhir Mal and Shihan, along with

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some of their confederates. They also recovered most of the looted property. Some of the ruffians were killed, but a few made good their escape.

Their hands tied behind their backs with ropes, Dhir Mal, Shihan and their accomplices were brought to the Guru's door. There they stood, humbled and crest-fallen, dreading the punishment they would receive at the hands of the Guru. When Guru Tegh Bahadur came out and looked at the bedraggled crowd, stricken dumb with shame, the first thing he ordered was to untie their hands. Calm and unruffled, the Guru stepped forward and spoke in a soft and tender voice, "Dhir Mal, why did you attack me and my family? If you wanted anything, I would have gladly given it to you. You have claims on me ; you are my nephew. Tell me even now if there is anything in this house that you fancy and I will give it to you."

Dhir Mal stood silent.

The Guru continued "Dhir Mal you are foolishly ambitious. Guruship involves a grave and heavy responsibility. It has little to do with wealth and worldly glory. If anything, it means endless work and may call for suffering and sacrifice. Go and live in peace. May God grant you wisdom to see things in their proper perspective."

The Guru ordered Makhan Shah to release the prisoners.

When the articles brought from Dhir Mal's camp were laid before the Guru for his inspection, he was distressed to find that they included some things which belonged to Dhir Mal. He ordered that they should be immediately returned to him. Makhan Shah and his men protested but the Guru not only pardoned his enemies but insisted that the goods should be restored to their rightful owners.

The same day when the Sangat collected for the evening prayer, the Guru delivered a sermon on covetousness and how it led to dissensions and bitter feuds and ended in the utter degradation of the persons concerned. He further added that renunciation alone brings inner peace. Not all the wealth of the world could bring happiness. Happiness lay in sharing the

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good things of life, in helping the less fortunate, in dispossessing worldly goods rather than collecting them. Why collect that which is perishable, collect virtues that make life's journey richer, nobler and happier.

Bakala was no place for Dhir Mal to stay any longer. He sensed the greatness of the Guru when his goods were returned to him including the invaluable copy of Adi Granth but his heart was too hard to understand the full nobility of the gesture. Disowned and dishonoured, he returned to Kartarpur.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had earlier sent messages to the various Sikh centres that the Masands and the leading Sikhs should come to Bakala for the celebration of the Diwali festival. He had felt that the organisational set-up of the panth needed tightening up; it had become weak and flabby under the mild ministries of Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkrishen. He had also noticed the disloyalty of several Masands under the influence of Ram Rai and Dhir Mal. He felt the need to assert his authority and bring some semblance of discpline in the organisation. In his capacity as pontiff, he had to ensure that the missionary centres performed the duties for which they were established. It was also necessary for him to visit as many centres as he could with a view to establishing personal contact with the Sangats and also for inspecting their working. He started the practice of holding prayer meetings both in the morning and in the evening and added to their attraction by inviting Kirtan parties from different cities of the Punjab. These meetings attracted large audiences and they were influenced by the charismatic personality of Guru Tegh Bahadur and their faith was strengthened by his deeply moving sermons.

Diwali was celebrated on a grand scale. Despite the hostility of rival groups at various Sikh centres, large mass of people came to Bakala from all over the country. The recent events had invested Bakala with a romantic halo and the Guru's reputation as a great saint and mystic served as a magnetic force. The little town of Bakala wore the festive garments for a whole week. Houses and shops were decorated and flags and huntings could be seen everywhere. Many multi-coloured tents were pitched for people who could not be accomodated in the houses. During the night, Bakala was turned into a fairy land by the hundred of earthen lamps and candles that were lighted on the house-tops.

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The fire works delighted the hearts of simple folks with their variety and ingenuity. But the most attractive part of the festival were the Kirtan parties who sang hymns at the congregational sessions presided over by the Guru. As the strains of rich music soared upward and the Sangat joined in the singing of the hymns, a feeling of collective God-consciousness overwhelmed the participants and they felt a calm and peace they had not experienced before. Every day the evening session ended with a sermon by the Guru which helped the audience to gain a greater knowledge of Gurbani and the basic principles and objectives of the Sikh faith.

The occasion provided Guru Tegh Bahadur a welcome opportunity to meet many of the Masands who had accepted his invitation and learn at first hand what was happening in different parts of the country. The Masands brought many presents for the Guru and gave expression to their loyalty. The Guru blessed them and sent his good wishes to the Sangats in far flung places.

Some time after the Diwali festival, Guru Tegh Bahadur decided to visit Amritsar. Amritsar had always attracted Guru Tegh Bahadur, not only because it was his birth place and all his early memories were intimately tied up with the sacred city but also because it was the spiritual centre of Sikh faith and was closely associated with his grandfather, Guru Arjun Dev and his great grandfather Guru Ram Das. Accompanied by some of the leading Sikhs, including Dwarka Das, Dargha Mal and Makhan Shah and a large retinue of his followers, Guru Tegh Bahadur, wended his way, by stages, to Amritsar. He reached Amritsar on the 22nd November, 1644. But here in Amritsar, something happened that will always be regarded as a black spot and a blemish in the history of the fair city of Amritsar. Under the orders of Harji, son of Meharban, all the doors leading to Harimandir were closed and the Guru was denied entry into the sacred temple. After Guru Hargobind left Amritsar and took permanent residence at Kiratpur, Meharban, son of Prithi Chand, took over the administration of Harimandir. It will be recalled that Prithi Chand, having failed to be nominated as the Guru, had always hoped his son, Meharban, would attain that high office. Despite all his intrigues and insinuations, he failed to achieve his goal. Meharban, having gained the control of Harimandir, began to act as a self-appointed guru. He appointed many Masands and they

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in turn, went about describing him as the seventh guru of the Sikhs. Neither Guru Har Rai nor Guru Harkrishen ever took the trouble to denounce him. After Meharban, his son Harji, took over charge or the temple and styled himself as the eighth guru. When Guru Tegh Bahadur entered the city of Amritsar, Harji thought that if the Guru took possession of Harimandir and was acknowledged by the citizens as the pontiff of the Sikh panth, all his authority and position will come to an end. He, therefore, quietly absented himself and ordered his men to let no one enter the sacred temple. Guru Tegh Bahadur took no offence; patiently he sat at a place, just behind the Takht Sahib, known as *Thara* or *Tham* Sahib. It is a raised platform octagonal in shape on which, at some later date, a small *gurdwara* was built in the sacred memory of the Guru's visits to that place. This tiny temple is today surrounded by labyrinthine lanes crowded with diminutive shops selling trinket and plastic toys. At this place, calm and unperturbed, the Guru sat under a tree for quite some time. Makhan Shah and his companion felt so enraged at this unbecoming behaviour of Harji's Masands that they approached Guru Tegh Bahadur and asked for his permission to forcibly open the doors. They argued that no one was entitled to close the doors of Harimandir; it was the temple of God and its doors must remain open for one and all to enter. Moreover, these robust and hardy soldiers had their own way of dealing with rogues, ruffians and disrespectful people. But the Guru replied, "We won't use force. They are ignorant people; they know not what they are doing. Their vision is blurred by avarice and their hearts hardened by greed. There is no future for them. By closing the doors of Harmandir, they have insulted the Sangat of Amritsar. It is for the Sangat to take action against them." The Guru was kind, gentle and forgiving; he had reached a stage which was beyond enmity and malice, beyond fear and anger. He left the city and went to rest outside Amritsar at a place known as Damdama, which has been commemorated with a Gurdwara. When the citizens of Amritsar learnt about the incident, they were mortified and attended on the Guru at Damdama and asked for his forgiveness and requested him to return to Harmindir. Besides the men, a group of women from Amritsar came and expressed their sense of grief and unhappiness at what had happened. They not only participated in the evening prayer but arranged a *langer*

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for all the *Sangat* collected there. The Guru blessed them by saying, "Maiyan Rab Rajaiyan, Bakhti Layain", (you are blessed by God and are devoted to Him).

The Guru and his party spent the night at the village of Walla at the request of a pious woman, named Hariyan, who placed her home at his disposal. The following day, the Guru blessed his hostess and along with his entourage left for Tarn Taran. Tarn Taran had developed into a very active missionary centre. It was also known for its cancer hospital. The Guru's visit collected large number of people from the surrounding area. Congregational prayer meetings were held at which the Guru delivered many sermons. The Guru made a substantial contribution for the welfare of the patients in the cancer hospital. The Guru conferred robes of honour on the leading Sikhs and exhorted them to continue the good work and spread the message of Guru Nanak among the brave and hardy peasantry of the Majha area. From Tarn Taran the Guru and his party went to Khadur where lived the descendants of Guru Angad. Here Guru Teg Bahadur met many of his old friends and relations and spent a few very pleasant days reminiscing on old times. The next place the Guru visited was Goindwal. Here, he was received among others by Bhai Dwarka Das, who was present at Bakala when the Guru was anointed as the pontiff of the Sikh faith. Goindwal was Guru Tegh Bahadur's ancestral home and during his childhood, he had spent many happy days there. The place was full of old associations which evoked memories of Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjun Dev. Moreover this place reminded him of his beloved teacher, Bhai Gurdas. Guru Tegh Bahadur spent nearly a month in Goindwal among congenial surroundings and in the company of relations and old friends. It was a happy and restful period and here, he worked out his plans regarding his tour of the Malwa region with a view to strengthening the hold of Sikhism among the people who, some time in the future, were to supply the largest number of soldiers to the armies of Guru Gobind Singh.

The Guru and his party crossed the Beas river and entered the Malwa region. It was his first tour of this area and he was so pleased with the simple and sturdy people of Malwa that he came twice again and preached his faith among them. The Guru visited several places in this region such as Khem Karan,

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Daroli, Sabo Ki Talwani and Dhamdhan. At all these places, he established new centres of Sikh faith and preached the message of fearlessness and sacrifice. At Sabo Ki Talwandi, he arranged for the digging of a large tank and at Dhamdhan, he got a house built for himself. His charismatic personality and his forceful sermons attracted large crowds at his congregational meetings and he utilised such gatherings for initiating social activities. The Sikh chronicles are full of the miracles performed by Guru and the strange and unusual events that took place during this tour. But, all the same, it can be safely presumed that the Guru's clarion call stirred the hearts of men and the faith of Guru Nanak came to be accepted by many people. After spending some six months in Malwa, Guru Tegh Bahadur went to Kiratpur and made it his future headquarters. He was received at Kiratpur with great honour and all those who had earlier attended on Guru Harkrishan, assured him of their loyalty and co-operation. At a specially arranged durbar, leading Sikhs from all over the country made their obeisance to the Guru and placed at his feet the rich presents they had brought with them. Notwithstanding the instigations of Dhir Mal and Harji and despite the unfortunate incident at Amritsar, Guru Tegh Bahadur came to be accepted as the acknowledged head of the Sikh faith. Many of the Masands from distant places requested Guru Teg Bahadur to visits their dioceses and thereby satisfy the craving of his followers who had been patiently waiting for his *darshan* for a long time.

It was time for Makhan Shah to take his leave from Guru Tegh Bahadur. Makhan Shah was a tall, well built man with a towering personality. He was not just big, but very big, both physically and morally in all respects, magnificently made, immensely strong, inexhaustible, intelligent, good-natured, highly cultured and civilised and occasionally impossibly obstinate. With his own men, he was gentle and forgiving. He had the rare gift that put him completely at ease with all sections of society. He had lived in the company of Guru Tegh Bahadur for several months and become his favourite companion. The two men went out for long walks or sat together in the evening watching the clouds chasing each other or the birds flying high in the sky. They did not talk much; the Guru was mostly a silent companion. But for Makhan Shah, it was a rare privilege to sit by the side of the Guru and feel the warmth and glow of his presence. He

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had come to sense the spiritual strength the Guru possessed and in spite of his own immense physical resources, he felt weak and insignificant before the Guru. As time passed, he felt more and more attached to the Guru. The very thought of leaving the Guru tore at his heart but he had to go because many urgent tasks were demanding his attention. At last he asked for the Guru's permission to leave on the following day. The Guru replied, "Makhan Shah, you and your men have done me great services and your companionship has been invaluable. I know it is time for you to go but rest assured my thoughts will be with you wherever you are." Makhan Shah was so overcome with emotions, that he could not utter a word. He bowed and left. He took leave of the Guru's family and also bade good-bye to a number of residents of Kiratpur whom he had come to know. The following morning, besides the Guru and his family members, a large crowd collected to bid God-speed to Makhan Shah and his men. Makhan Shah looked like a Mughal prince ready to set out on a long journey and his men, fully armed and dressed in semi-military uniforms, stood along with their horses, ready to mount at the word of command. Makhan Shah bowed before the Guru and touched his feet. As he rose, the Guru embraced him. Makhan Shah felt a lump in his throat and tears rolled down his eyes. The Guru's eyes were also moist.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" the Guru asked, almost in a whisper. For a moment, Makhan Shah hesitated and then said in a low voice, "Master, grant me a happy life and a painless death and thereafter let me forever live in your presence."

The Guru raised his hand and blessed him. He turned quickly and mounted his horse and led his men on the long road that lay ahead of him. The Guru and the whole crowd stood there until the horsemen disappeared beyond the trees that skirted the town of Kiratpur.

For some time Guru Tegh Bahadur had been feeling the need of a more secure and secluded place than Kiratpur. He wanted to get away further from the haunts of Mughal forces. He thought it would be best to find some place of scenic beauty among the hills, surrounded by forests, far away from the din of busy cities. In the meantime, the Guru received an invitation from the Rani of Bilaspur, requesting the Guru's presence on the

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13 May, 1665, when certain ceremonies connected with the death of her husband, Raja Dip Chand, were to be performed. Raja Dip Chand's father, Raja Tara Chand, was a devoted follower of of Guru Hargobind and his children had maintained close relations with the succeeding Gurus. Guru Tegh Bahadur went to Bilaspur, participated in the ceremonies connected with the deceased prince and offered his condolence to the Rani. Before leaving Bilaspur, the Guru expressed his desire to set up his home somewhere among the hills. The Rani was too pleased with the thought of Guru taking residence somewhere near Bilaspur. She offered to present him three villages. It is claimed that the Guru politely refused to accept the land as a present and finally paid cash for the purchase of some land situated near the well-known village of Makhowal. At this spot, he initiated the building of a town, which he christened as Chak Nanki, after the name of his mother. The foundations stone of Chak Nanaki was laid on 19 June, 1665, by Baba Gurditta, grandson of Bhai Budha. It was only when Guru Gobind Singh first came to Chak Nanaki that Guru Tegh Bahadur changed its name to Anandpur (The City of Bliss) which, in a way, signified the immense joy that flooded his being at the sight of his handsome son.

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6

The Missionary

The foundation of Chak Nanaki having been laid, Guru Tegh Bahadur devoted most of his time to the planning and building of the new town. With his leading followers, he discussed the plan, the financial requirements, and the organisational set-up needed for the work and finally apportioned the work among them. The plan included the building of a Gurdwara, a guest house and a residential place for the Guru's family. The first task was to dig wells and begin the construction of a tank. Many people were attracted to settle in Chak Nanaki because of the warm and endearing personality of the Guru and the fact that Chak Nanaki had been declared as his future headquarter. Some people were allured by the natural beauty of the surroundings and also because land was being offered free or at a nominal price. The Guru sent out emissaries to most of the large towns in the Punjab and they invited traders and artisans to settle in Chak Nanaki. Soon traders, shop-keepers and craftsmen of all types started drifting towards the new town. They were allotted land and given assistance to build shops and houses. Within a short time, the place was humming with activity. The Guru often came to Chak Nanaki to watch the progress of the work and occasionally held prayer meetings there. When you come to think of it, it is only the kings or the saints who have the magic wands to set up new cities; the former because of the wealth and the power that they possess and the latter because of their magnetism and the devotion that they command. Generally speaking, the cities built by the kings became pleasure haunts of the rich and satanic centres of vice and the cities built by the saints attract pilgrims, priests and scholars and mostly retain their devotional character. Chak Nanaki (Anandpur), even after the

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passage of more than three centuries, is characterised by its twin features of piety and prayer.

While the work at Chak Nanaki proceeded satisfactorily, Guru Tegh Bahadur's thoughts turned to the need of generating a greater sense of unity and brotherhood among his followers. His experience at Amritsar had not been too happy and he had become more than ever conscious of the fissiparous tendencies among the Sikhs. The need of the hour was to establish firm links of the central authority at Kiratpur with the Sangats all over the country. For this purpose, it was necessary to establish personal rapport with the leaders of Sangats at different places. But above all, it was the religious faith and fervour of the people which had to be aroused and strengthened. Faith was the paramount factor; it was the cohesive force, the cement that bound them together. The Guru felt that he had to go out personally and preach the word of God more directly and forcefully. As head of the church, it was his duty to ensure that the underlying ideas of the Sikh faith were understood by the followers and Gurbani became not merely popular but a living force among them. The urge to propagate the faith of Guru Nanak took hold over him and he decided to go out and perform the task as best as he could. He had also the premonition that hard times lay ahead and the people had to be forewarned and prepared for it. This very idea was at the back of his mind which had led to the founding of the town of Chak Nanaki. It was expected to serve three purposes. It would be a place that provided greater measures of security; it would become, at some future date, the stronghold of Sikhism and finally it would serve as a secluded place for the Guru to suit his contemplative moods. When the work at Chak Nanaki had gained considerable momentum and he felt that it could be safely left to some members of the establishment, the Guru issued instructions for preparations to be made for undertaking a long journey.

Some authorities are of the view that Guru Tegh Bahadur went on his long tour of Eastern India because of the unhappy bickerings among the members of the family. This is altogether untenable because the Guru was temperamentally and, in terms of the spiritual state of his being, far above such petty quarrels or emotional entanglements. Dhir Mal and Harji were men of no

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consequence and in any case, they had been h umbled and could be easily ignored.

The other argument that is sometimes offered for the Guru's undertaking this journey is that Guru Tegh Bahadur had come to Punjab for the purpose of offering his condolence on the death of Guru Har Rai and had planned to return to Patna where he had left his wife Gujri and his son Govind Rai in the care of his brother-in-law Kirpal Chand. This assumption, it would be observed, is very much involved with the date of birth of Gobind Rai (the future Guru Gobind Singh). If we accept the conventional and prevalent date of his birth (22 Dece nber, 1666), the argument falls down like a house of cards because Guru Tegh Bahadur set out on the journey on 3 October, 1665. According to these dates, Govind Rai was not born at the time Guru Tegh Bahadur left Kiratpur. If, on the other hand, we presume that Gobind Rai was born a year earlier, it does not fit into the jigsaw puzzle of history. It creates far too many lacunas. We are of the view that the generally accepted date (22 December 1666) of the birth of Gobind Rai is correct and that he was born during the second visit of Guru Teg Bahadur to the Eastern region of India. It is also a fact that the Guru was not in Patna on the day Gobind Rai was born as is evident from one of his *hukamnamas*. It is obvious that the Guru left Kiratpur primarily for the propagation of his faith. It can, however, be added that his resolve was further fortified by the visit of two parties, one from Dacca and the other from Patna. After he had been anointed as the head of the Sikh church, Guru Tegh Bahadur had been receiving many invitations from the Sangats in different parts of India to pay them a visit. But now, all of a sudden, emerged on the scene Bhai Darbari Das and Bhai Chain Sukh from Patna and Bhai Balaki Das and Bhai Hulas Chand from Dacca and requested the Guru, on behalf of the respective Sangats, to sanctify these cities with his presence. They pleaded that at many places in the Eastern region, the Sangats had withered away for want of support and encouragement and it was very essential to revive and strengthen the faith in those far off centres. The people living in Bihar and Bengal could not come to Kiratpur or Chak Nanaki because the distances were vast and travelling dangerous. The Guru appreciated their view-point and assured them that it would not be long before they would find him amidst themselves.

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He would surely follow the long standing tradition of the Sikh Gurus to travel long distance, re-kindle the faith of the people and share their joys and sorrows.

When all the arrangements were made and horses, carriages and carts needed for the journey were ready for the move, the Guru, accompanied by mother Nanaki, his wife Gujri, his brother-in-law Kirpal Chand, some of the leading Sikhs such as Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das, Bhai Dyal Das and Bhai Mani Ram and a large retinue of attendants left the town of Kiratpur on 3 October, 1665. Kirpal Chand was the chief organiser of the tour; he assigned the duties, arranged the finances, sent messengers ahead to inform the hosts about the arrival of the Guru's party and set up the camp at the next halting station. As usual, the Guru and his leading Sikhs rode on horses, the ladies travelled in carriages, provisions and tents were loaded in bullock-carts and the attendants walked on foot. Travelling was done in a leisurely fashion. Almost every important town and village was used as a resting place. And at most of the places the Guru and his party stayed for a couple of days. The news of the Guru's arrival collected most of his followers from the adjoining villages and almost every evening congregational meetings were held and the Guru addressed the assembled people. Most of his sermons dealt with religious problems. In a simple and direct manner he explained to his audience the virtue of prayer, the importance of the love of God, the value of service to the people and the way life could be led happily and contentedly. Other people asked questions and the Guru resolved their doubt and difficulties. He often helped to settle the local disputes and whenever he found an opportunity he initiated projects which were beneficial to the people as a whole, such as the digging of wells or tanks or the setting up of schools and dharamshalas. These simple, hardy people were happy to serve the Guru and listen to his sermons. The Guru blessed them and his sermon deepened their faith and enriched their lives. In this manner, passing through many villages and spreading the word of God among the people, Guru Tegh Bahadur and his party reached Saifabad near Patiala.

The town of Saifabad was founded by Nawab Saif Ali Khan who was closely related to Shah Jehan. He had held high offices and had spent his youth among princes and courtiers. But when Aurangzeb ascended the throne, he did not find favour with the

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new Emperor. Aurangzeb more or less banished him by the grant of twelve villages in this dry and parched region. The Nawab had had enough of the court intrigues and was quite pleased to come to this secluded place and lead a peaceful retired life. He build a large, spacious mansion, almost like a fort and around it, laid a beautiful garden, spread over many acres. His mind turned inward and he became deeply religious. Next to his house, he built a mosque and spent many hours of the day in prayer and meditation. He was a refined and cultured man and carried his scholarly pursuits diligently. He was a well informed person and had some knowledge of the Sikh Gurus and the faith they propagated. He had also learnt about Guru Tegh Bahadur's long years of meditation at Bakala. When he learnt about the arrival of the Guru, both out of respect and curiosity, he went out to receive him and invited the Guru's party to pitch their tents in his garden He persuaded the Guru and his family to stay in his house. In no time, the two men took to each other and became warm friends for the rest of their lives. The Guru was deeply touched by the courtesy and hospitality of the Nawab and Saif Ali Khan found in the Guru a rare individual with whom he could discuss in depth matters spiritual—something he missed in the oasis he had built in that arid region. Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed in Saifabad for almost ten days and more or less every day diwans were held and the Guru delivered his discourses. The Nawab made it a point to attend and listen to the Guru's sermons. The evening before his departure, the Guru talked about human happiness. Happiness, the Guru said, was sought by all men but few, very few, managed to attain it and that, too, temporarily. Most men believe that the possession of wealth would bring them happiness. In its pursuit, they toil and sweat and labour, run from door to door, suffer insults and indignities, undergo hardship and finally amass some wealth. It is doubtful if it brings them happiness. But it does become a source of worry, something to be hidden and protected. It often leads to extravagant living which in its wake brings ill-health and early death. It has been generally observed that the very rich are worn out with worries, tied down with innumerable engagements, obsessed with problems, haunted by real or imaginary enemies, hated by most men and are seldom care-free, happy and relaxed. Not only are they generally miserable but are close-fisted and miserly. As a contrast, men with

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average means are hearty, happy and generous. They enjoy life and make the best of most things. They find joy in the little things of life. Happiness lies in contentment and contentment flows from an attitude of mind in which the individual is grateful to God for the gifts he has been granted. Moreover, such an individual looks to God, and not to any man, for his bounty and munificence. Indeed what can one man give to another ? Can he share the pain of one who is suffering ? Can he save him from disaster or death ? Can he bestow the gift of a son or a daughter ? Can he make him a great artist, administrator or scholar ? At best what one man can give to another is paltry, insignificant and evanescent. Then, why not go to the Lord for His mercy and bounty? In contentment and trust in God lies the secret of happiness. But man achieves supreme happiness when he is in tune with his Master and has reached a state of spiritual advancement where the worldly gifts have no value, pain and pleasure have no meaning and the devotee has reached the region of Eternal Peace. The Guru ended his sermon with the remark that this stage is achieved only through *Nam-Simran*.

On the day of Guru's departure from Saifabad, the Nawab offered a great many gifts to the Guru and his family. Among other valuables, Saif Ali Khan presented a pedigree horse known as Shri Dhar, which became a great favourite of the Guru. It was a touching departure; the Guru and the Nawab embraced each other, warmly held each other's hands for quite some time and promised to meet again. The two were tied together by spiritual bonds, a kind of friendship that exists between Sufis and saints. The Nawab had found a firm place in the heart of the Guru and, during his travels, wherever the Guru found something beautiful or attractive, he sent it as a gift to Saif Ali Khan, as is evident from one of his *hukamnamas*. It is addressed to Bhai Dyal Das and Bhai Ram Rai and other members of the Monghyr Sangat. It will be recalled that Monghyr is a historical town, situated on the promontory of Ganges and is famous for the manufacture of arms, ebony and brass work. Among other things the *hukamnama* says, "Send five beautiful brass utensils with inlaid work, particularly flasks and cups, to the Kalyan Das Dharamsala at Delhi. They are to be presented to Saif Ali Khan. Be sure that the utensils are of high quality."

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Hukamnamas, it may be mentioned, were messages or instructions, in the form of brief epistles, sent by Guru Tegh Bahadur to various Sangats. They were always written by the Guru himself. Thirty of these *hukamnamas* have survived the ravages of time. At the first reading of these *Hukamnamas*, the reader is shocked by the unaffected simplicity, the artlessness and naivete of their diction. The language is archaic, ungrammatical, unadorned and lacking in style or sophistication. Coming as they do from a poet of such versatility as Guru Tegh Bahadur was, they appear to be written in a casual, unceremonious and off-hand manner. But when they are read collectively and in depth, certain marked and pronounced characteristics come to the forefront and indicate the true purpose of these *hukamnamas*. The first thing that strikes the reader is that they are addressed by name to each Sangat; the namas of all the numbers of the Sangat are written at the commencement of each epistle. One of the *hukamnamas* contain as many as seventy-two names. This gives some idea of the close relationship or rapport the Guru had built up with each of his followers. Obviously the receipt of such a letter must have given tremendous sense of importance and pride to each individual. Secondly, the Guru always addressed these *hukamnamas* to the Sangat as a whole which lent importance to the unity and collective feature of the community and strengthened Sangat as an organisation. Thirdly, the Guru always sent his good wishes and blessings to the Sangat. The Guru used these epistles to single out the leader of the Sangat whose word was to be treated as the word of the Guru and whose orders were to be obeyed unquestioningly. The Guru occasionally mentioned the name of the Masand who was to collect the monthly donations from the followers and send them to the Guru or to the organisational headquarters. The Guru's blessings took various forms: he blessed them and offered them his own protection; he promised to be with the Sangat at the time of crisis; he blessed the trade or commerce in which some persons were engaged; he blessed the home of his followers; he blessed them that they may have many sons and daughters; he prayed for the fulfilment of their dreams and desire, and finally he blessed them to enjoy fruitful lives. Though simple and unsophisticated, the blessings must have warmed the hearts of his followers. His followers were mostly simple and unlettered folks and for them this contact with the

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Guru must have been the greatest gift of God and the fact that sometimes he asked them to do some work for him must have been regarded a boon and a rare opportunity. Apart from the blessings, the *hukamnamas* influenced the lives of his followers and instilled in them faith, courage and fearlessness. A man of his spiritual stature was bound to deepen their faith and set many of them in search for spiritual enlightenment. Indeed blessed were those who came in touch with the Guru and still more those who had the opportunity to serve him by being assigned to undertake some specific duty or task.

As historical, record these epistles have little value for they mostly tell of the places visited by the Guru or the things he needed or the homely tasks he assigned to his followers. But when studied from the viewpoint of faith, they give us an insight into the far and distant places he spread the faith of Guru Nanak and the way he established new centres and strengthened the unity and solidarity of his followers.

From Saifabad, the Guru and his party went to Patiala. The town was in the grip of an epidemic of small-pox. The Guru's party pitched its tents outside the town, near a water tank. People flocked to obtain Guru's blessings. Prayer meetings were held twice every day; early in the morning and late in the evening before it became dark. The Guru, in his sermons, explained to the people the reasons for which man was afflicted with sorrow. Ill-health, disease, pain, anguish and sorrow descend upon man like dark clouds in the rainy season, when the Lord is forgotten and man is totally absorbed in worldly pursuits. It is covetousness that causes restlessness; it is contentment that leads to peace. Peace lies within man, inside his heart. Strangely enough, it is also the abode of God. If one were to seek within himself, he would find both peace and the Ultimate Reality.

It is said that many people, who were suffering from small-pox, were cured when they took bath in the tank on the bank of which the Guru had pitched his tents. The first person to be cured was one Karmo Devi, an aged woman. It was the Guru's benediction, a solemn invocation of the divine blessing that saved the people from this ghastly disease. In the memory of Guru's visit, a gurdwara was later built on the spot which is known as Dukhnivaran Gurdwara. Even today it attracts thousands of people.

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The Guru visited many villages in the neighbourhood of Patiala and the memory of his brief sojourn still lingers in these places through folk-lore or through the gifts he bestowed or the works that were undertaken for social uplift. The collective memory of the people continues to cherish these visits as a dispensation of divine favour.

From Patiala the Guru turned to Bangar Desh, which, despite its arid and waterless tracts, attracted him because of its simple and homely folks. The Guru had been there before and had sown the seed of Sikh faith. He went back to see how the tender plant was growing, to ensure that the new centres had started functioning and to provide whatever additional assistance they needed. But now that he had set out in the capacity of the Guru, he was primarily concerned with two tasks: to boldly and directly propagate the faith and to cast out fear from the hearts of men. At every congregational meeting, he explained at length the deeper spiritual aspects of the Sikh faith, the underlying basic principles on which the faith was founded and for this purpose, he encouraged and invited questions from his audience. The answers to these questions helped to throw light on aspects of Sikh faith which needed clarification and at the same time helped to resolve the doubts of the people. Generally the questions were simple, mostly related to the everyday problems of the people and the socio-political difficulties that came in their way but occasionally philosophical issues were raised by people who were conversant with the various schools of Hindu philosophy and sought to understand the way they were interpreted by Guru Nanak and his successors. All through his long tour, not only in Bangar Desh but also in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Assam, he took great pains to explain both the ethical and philosophical principles of Sikh faith. Through his long years of silent study and meditation at Bakala, he had delved deep into the intricacies of Sikh mysticism and experienced in his own person the awakening of the soul and the establishment of a direct relationship with the Ultimate Reality and he was fully ripe to share his knowledge with all those who needed guidance and assistance in the quest of the inner-self. Simultaneously, he functioned on two planes; the simple propagator of the new faith and the guide, preceptor and philosopher of Sikh mysticism.

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Secondly, the Guru was conscious of the ever-present fear of the authoritarian state that gripped the hearts of the people. Most of the Hindus and a fairly large portion of the Muslim population too, suffered from a sense of insecurity and were never certain when the axe would fall and for what reason. Aurangzeb was not only a puritan but a fanatic and in order to establish his own "Alamgiri and Zindapiri" myth, he carried on a *Jehad* (religious war) not only against the Hindus and Sikhs but against Muslims who differed from him such as Shias and other sects. No doubt persecution was mostly ordered for political reasons but very often it was let loose in the name af Shariat which enjoined strict enforcement of inflexible formalism. It was not only the Hindus who suffered death at the hands of Imperial tyranny but hundreds of Muslim saints, scholars and religious luminaries suffered persecution and death under Aurangzeb's orders. The contemporary records and annals are full of the names of Muslim martyrs who suffered because of the freedom of worship they sought. It is, therefore, not surprising that a sense of underlying anxiety pervaded among large sections of the society. The dominant characteristic of the age was the political and religious rivalry among different social groups and the resultant jealousy, hatred and distrust. Guru Tegh Bahadur sought to banish fear from the hearts of men. He was aware that men suffered from all kinds of fears. Apart from the terror arising from the fury of the elements, such as earthquakes, tempests on the sea, hurricanes on land, thunder and lightning, darkness, spirits and ghosts, men were afraid of losing their freedom and being imprisoned, being divested of their property and belongings and finally of being executed. The fear of death, the sudden end of life, was the greatest fear. The State was merciless and imposed punishment on the slightest pretext. The Guru tackled the problem in three ways. First of all, he evoked the dormant martial spirit among the peasantry by presenting swords, bows and arrows to those who had the making of soldiers in days to come. They felt like heroes having been singled out of the crowd and dreamt of glories on the field of war. They were incidentally reminded that cowards die a thousand deaths but the brave ones die only once. Secondly, the Guru constantly preached the impermanence of life and compared life to a passing shadow of a cloud or the wall of smoke or a castle of sand. The worldly possessions, he taught, were of no permanent value; perforce they

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were left behind and all that counted in the final analysis were the virtuous acts of man. He stressed the value of non-attachment, the attainment of unruffled poise and the peace of mind. He emphasised the ideal of Bhakti, the attainment of *Nirvana* through meditation and the termination of the cycle of births and deaths. He presented an age-old and yet a new ideal and a new goal wherein life had a different purpose and worldly possessions had no value whatsoever. This was meant to bring a psychological change in the outlook of men. Lastly, as expressed in his sixteenth *Sloka*, he pronounced that the man who had banished fear from his heart was a liberated soul and could be considered a *Braham Gyani*, one who had realised the higher moral and spiritual truths. The *Sloka* reads as follows :

He who does not frighten others
Nor submits to any fear;
Saith Nanak: Listen O my mind to my words
Proclaim such a one to be enlightened.

As the Guru moved from one village to another, holding congregational meetings, delivering brief sermons, singing devotional songs along with the Sangat and presenting gifts and helping the people to overcome their difficulties, he, in his own quiet and gentle way, brought a subtle change in their life. He wended his way through Samana, Malowal, Hadiala and Khewa. Everywhere he preached the ideal of fearlessness and stressed the achievement of *Nirvana* as the one and only goal of life.

When at Khewa, the Guru learnt that a Sangat from Kabul, after visiting Anandpur, was coming for his *darshan*. *Darshan*, unfortunately, has no equivalent in English language. It means much more than meeting or giving audience. It means the fulfilment of a longing to meet someone plus the devotion of a disciple for his guru. It includes blessings and benediction; the granting of a favour or a reward for services rendered. It brings contentment, comfort and happiness. The Sangat from Kabul brought gifts for the Guru and spent three days with him listening to his sermons and participating in the congregational prayers. The Guru blessed them and told them to lead noble lives and ever keep the words of Guru Nanak in their hearts. They felt sad when they left and some of them were so emotionally charged that they cried

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openly. The Guru went some way outside the village to bid them goodbye.

The Guru continued his journey leisurely and passing through many villages reached Dhamdhan in the first week of November, 1665. This was his second visit to Dhamdhan and it is obvious that he was particularly attracted to this place and wanted to develop it as one of the major missionary centres for the propagation of Sikh faith. During his earlier visit, he had appointed Bhai Daygo as the *masand* and had enjoined upon him to build a Gurdwara there and also arrange for the digging of a well. He was happy to see that the work had been properly executed and a well-knit sangat had been established. As the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak fell that year on 12 November and the Guru happened to be in Dhamdhan, it was decided to celebrate the anniversary in a big way. Emissaries were sent out to all the nearby places to inform the people about the celebration. People started pouring into Dhamdhan and soon the place was bustling with excited crowds, pitching tents and finding other places for their stay. The Guru continued to address the prayer meetings every evening and answered questions pertaining to the various facets of Sikh religion.

It appears that during the four weeks that the Guru took to travel from Kiratpur to Dhamdhan, he was shadowed by the secret agents of the provincial government. They kept sending reports to Aurangzeb about the growing popularity of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the type of sermons he delivered at various places. It is also possible that the local Qazis and Pandits were unhappy about the number of people who were influenced by the Guru and had become his followers. They, too, must have poisoned the minds of State officials against the Guru. When all these reports reached Aurangzeb, he ordered that the Guru be arrested and brought to Delhi. On the 8th November, 1665, Alam Khan Rohilla appeared on the scene and arrested Guru Tegh Bahadur along with Bhai Sati Das, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Gawal Das, Dyal Das and a number of other followers. It is alleged by some writers that the Guru and his companions were not arrested but taken to Delhi to meet the Emperor. It is for this reason that they were not locked up in any prison but placed in the custody of Raja Ram Singh of Amber, where they were treated as guests. Be that as it may, the Guru, along with his companion, was

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escorted to Delhi and this was probably the first and the last time that the Guru met the Emperor.

It was the meeting of two opposite extremes: Aurangzeb, proud of his vast empire and the unlimited power, the power of life and death that he enjoyed over his people and Guru Tegh Bahadur without any claim or desire for power or pelf. The only hold he had on his followers was that of the fellowship of faith, love and spiritual attachment. Aurangzeb regarded himself as the representative or viceroy of God on earth; the Guru presented himself as a humble servant of the Lord. Aurangzeb claimed to be the arbiter of the destiny of princes and paupers, a man whose word was law which none could challenge; the Guru believed that his life and actions were guided by the *hukam* (the law) of the Almighty that shaped and ordered the destiny of every living being.

Notwithstanding the numerous innocent men and women he had sent to the gallows, the atrocities he had committed, the imprisonment of his father and the murder of his brothers, Aurangzeb regarded himself as a *pir* and despite his long years of meditation and prayer at Bakala and his life of service to his people, Guru Tegh Bahadur considered himself as a humble petitioner at the door of the Lord, a fakir seeking the Grace of the Almighty. It appeared that it was a strange and unusual meeting of haughtiness and humility, might and modesty, power and piety. There was little in common between the two men and the meeting was not likely to last for long.

The Emperor was anxious to have a close look at the man who rode and hunted and yet claimed to be a religious leader, the man who attracted large crowds wherever he went, and above all, the man, who, during the reign of Alamgir Aurangzeb, had the audacity to convert Muslims to his own faith. A private audience was arranged for the Guru. The Emperor sat on a high throne dressed in all his imperial regalia, surrounded by a few courtiers, including a couple of *imams* who could interpret Islamic laws. The Guru was offered a cushioned settee. After the formal salutations, the Guru sat down and waited for Aurangzeb to break the silence and ask his questions. Aurangzeb measured this tall, well built, handsome man from top to toe. He noticed the poise, dignity and self-possession of the Guru; he was somewhat disturbed by his composure and imperturbability. The Guru sat cool and quiet, looking straight before him, seemingly indifferent to the

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outcome of the interview. The emperor had no doubts that he could destroy his adversary whenever he wanted. All the same, it would be interesting to see what kind of a man he was. In his heart of hearts, the Emperor was somewhat afraid of pirs and fakirs; he was not sure what powers they possessed. It was easy to execute them but the ultimate outcome of such acts belonged to the region of the unknown. This was a disturbing thought and unless the execution became a political necessity, it was best to let these harmless people carry on their so-called spiritual pursuits.

The Emperor cleared his throat and shot the first question. "I understand that you go about propagating a new faith, a new religion. Why and what is its purpose?"

The Guru explained that it was not a new religion; very soon it would be a hundred years since Guru Nanak started preaching it. It had the one and only purpose to make men conscious of the presence of God, show them the way and lead them on to the path of salvation. Between God and man stood the wall of *maya* (illusion) and it was for the religion to break down this wall and bring man face to face with God and help him to merge his identity with that of the Ultimate Reality.

"Whence comes this illusion or what you call *maya*?" the Emperor asked.

The illusion is caused by egotism and the love of the material world. The two together cause a sense of dualism between man and God and it is through *Nam-Simran* and virtuous conduct that man undergoes the true religious experience that leads to the awakening of the soul. It is a mystical experience through which man realises his oneness with God and by passing through different levels of God-consciousness, the finite is ultimately merged with the Infinite.

For some time the Emperor sat silent. He had heard of mystical experiences but had no personal knowledge of them. He felt that it would be best to leave such matters alone and come down to the earth. With some show of anger, the Emperor asked;

"Why do you convert Muslims to your faith? Don't you know that Islam is the State religion and in converting Muslims, you commit a crime punishable with death?"

The Guru explained that Sikhism did not seek to convert people to its own faith. It was a religion of love and compassion. Its doors were open to one and all. It sought to help the

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poor and the needy ; its main object was to lessen pain, sorrow and suffering. It denounced sinful life and advocated virtuous living. If anything, it advised Muslims to become better Muslims and Hindus to become better Hindus. He invited the Emperor's attention to the words of Guru Nanak :

> "Thou sayest they prayers five times, giving them five names,
> But let truth be thy first, honest living the second and good of all thy third;
> Let thy fourth prayer be honest mind and the fifth the praise of the Lord.
> Say thou, yea, the prayer of Deeds and be thou thus a Muslim;
> Any other prayer is false; O false is their value.

and again :

> Let mercy be thy mosque, faith the prayer mat ; and honest living thy Quran.
> Humility thy circumcision ; and good conduct thy fast.
> Thus dost thou become a (true) Muslim.
> If pious work be thy Kaaba and Truth thy teacher and good deeds thy prayer,
> And if thy rosary be of His Will, the Lord, yea, will keep thy honour.

In the same way, Guru Nanak advises the Brahmin to attain a higher consciousness of Brahma.

> He alone is Brahmin who knoweth Brahma, Yea, the God,
> And practiseth Austerity and Contemplation and Self-control and doth righteous deeds,
> And keepeth the religion of contentment and culture
> And earnest Emancipation, breaking the Bonds (of desire).
> Yea, such a Brahmin is worthy of being worshipped.

The Emperor appeared pleased with this approach of Guru Nanak towards other religions. But he was not satisfied ; he felt that there was something incomplete about the argument. He thought for a moment and then addressed the Guru, "If the only purpose of Guru Nanak was to make the Muslims and Hindus more

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profoundly conscious of their faiths, then what had Sikhism to offer of its own?"

The Guru explained that Sikhism was an eclectic system and was based on the cultural heritage of India and as such had a special appeal for Indians. Like the Vedas and Upanishads, it believes that there are things which are inaccessible to normal human senses. There are regions which cannot be reached by reason or intellect alone. There are some aspects of knowledge which cannot be reached except through revelation. Human powers are limited and yet man is endowed with powers or sources of immense power which are hidden and become operative under special circumstances. Ordinary human consciousness is hedged with all manner of limitations but there is the supra-consciousness which, when awakened, gains knowledge of regions unknown to most human beings. This supra-consciousness makes man aware of the transcendental. Islam believes that God and man are two separate beings and they can never meet ; there is no merging of the one into the other. Man can only become conscious of God and is finally rewarded for his actions on the Day of judgment. Sikhism views this relationship somewhat differently. It believes that human soul is part of the Eternal soul and its salvation lies not in the attainment of a restful place in a paradise but in the merging with the Infinite. It admits of the transcendental character of God and the human soul. The Supra-consciousness necessary for spiritual development can be gained through certain disciplines and through the passage of the soul through certain regions described by Guru Nanak. As the Sufis believed in the four stages of spiritual development, viz. Shariat, Tariqat, Marifat and Haqiqat and for each stage, they have prescribed certain disciplines and rigorous rules of conduct, so has Sikhism prescribed a way of life, the discipline of *Nam-Simran*, the doctrine of *Shabad* and the five regions or *Khands*, Dharam Khand, Gyan Khand, Saram Khand, Karam Khand and Sach Khand through which the soul has to pass to reach the region of Truth. It is through meditation and Samadhi and the disciplines that accompany them that man gains knowledge or vision of the transcendental world.

The Guru ended his somewhat long explanation by saying that in this sense Sikhism does not convert people, it only liberates them. The human mind is chained to the world, its vices and

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viciousness and most religions are tied to rites, rituals and external formalities ; Sikhism seeks to snap these bonds and sets the human soul free to soar in higher regions. Sikhism lays the greatest emphasis on mystical experience without which religion has little meaning. Ethical living, love of God and man are the first steps on the road to the final attainment of salvation.

The Emperor turned round and with a flourish of his hand, said, "It is all to the good, this love of God and man and the mystical experiences you speak of. But what I don't understand is the need for another religion. I believe that Islam is a complete religion and provides everything a man needs. Why another religion and why don't you join us and help spread the sacred message of Mohammed?"

There was pin-drop silence. No one moved. All eyes were turned to Guru Tegh Bahadur. A vague smile flitted across his face. He turned towards the Emperor and spoke in a deep, resonant voice. "It is an age-old belief with us that whenever people go astray from the righteous path and evil becomes the predominant way of life, the Lord in His mercy, sends His messenger on earth to uphold *dharma* and spread the word of God among mankind. From time to time such messengers have come and their teachings have given rise to movements known as religions. Such a messenger was Guru Nanak. It is at His behest that such things come to pass. Who can question His judgement ? There were religions before Islam and sure enough, when the need arises, new religions will come into being."

The Guru paused for a moment and then continued." Why should we be disturbed at the existence of more than one religion ? Religions are points of light on the periphery of a circle, equidistant from the centre which represents the ultimate Reality. Each light seeks to guide men on the spiritual path and each one is the torch of Eternal Truth and sheds its light in the world of darkness. Men may be drawn to anyone of these lights but the goal remains the same. In fact each light-point does not one but two things. It guides man to his ultimate goal and, at the same time, it make him aware of his duty in this world. As an Emperor, it is your duty to be just and impartial to your subjects and do all within your power to make them happy and contented. But as a human being, you too need to travel from the periphery to the centre of the circle and

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for that you must do something more than normal duties of a king. As far as I am concerned, I am moving along a path of light that satisfies me, serves all my needs and I don't feel the need to change my religion."

The Emperor did not relish the Guru's reference to his personal life but it set him thinking. Suddenly the film roll of his life momentarily unfolded itself before him and there was much in it that disturbed him. He felt angry because of this unnecessary reminder but controlled himself and kept quiet.

The *imams* were feeling fidgety and uncomfortable. They had a trump card to play and they could not resist the temptation and the rare opportunity that came their way. One of them rose, bowed to the waist and asked permission to speak. When the permission was granted with a gesture by the Emperor, he said "If our friend here is so deeply religious, he will surely possess some spiritual powers. Could he not display his spirituality by performing a miracle or two ?"

The courtiers applauded and murmured their approval. The Emperor, too was pleased. This was the way they always cornered their opponents. The Guru sat with an air of cold serenity. He did not utter a word and paid no attention to the questions raised by the Imam. It was an impertinence which deserved utter neglect. But the Emperor chipped in and repeated the question.

The Guru raised his thoughtful eyes and then scanned his audience from one end to the other with a look of reproach as though they had brought the serious discussion to the level of a joke or jest lacking earnestness. With a voice charged with emotion, he said, "Miracles, why do you wish to see miracles ? We are surrounded with miracles. Everyday every moment miracles are happening around us. This whole universe is a miracle. The fact that the sun rises every morning and sets in the evening is a miracle. The facts that days are followed by nights, the seasons change, the buds ripen into flowers, the whole cosmos moves in a regulated way are miracles. That our galaxy is filled with millions of stars and that there are millions of other galaxies is a miracle and that they all move in an orderly way without crashing into one another is another miracle. But, I believe, you want me to perform a miracle that would be contrary to the laws of nature. Who am I to change the appointed course of nature ? Even if I could, I would not perform a miracle because that would be a sacrilgious act.

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You need another God to perform a true miracle. And I believe in the One and only God. There is no other God. The kind of miracles you wish to see are performed by way-side magicians and tricksters. If you seek such men, look elsewhere and not among Sadhus and fakirs who live in a world of their own."

The Emperor and his courtiers were stunned into silence. For a few moments, they hung their heads in shame; the atmosphere was heavy with palpable silence. With visible signs of irritation, the Emperor brought the meeting to a close. His last words were, "That's enough. Raja Jai Singh, you may take your guest to your house."

After a stay of one month and five days in the custody of Raja Jai Singh of Amber, Guru Tegh Bahadur was released on 13 December, 1665. It has to be admitted that even though Aurangzeb was impressed with the saintliness of the Guru, it was through the intervention of the Raja that he was released. After staying for another three days in Delhi, the Guru and his party set out on their journey to the East. As usual the Guru and some of the leading Sikhs rode on horses, the Guru's wife and mother along with a few other ladies travelled in carriages, the tents and provisions were loaded in bullock carts and the attendants walked on foot. The Delhi Sangat came to see the Guru before his departure and bade farewell to all the members of the entourage on the out-skirts of the city and watched this small, colourful procession led by the Guru mounted on Sri Dhar, the horse that had been presented by Nawab Saif Ali Khan, disappear among the trees.

Wending their way through villages and towns and camping in the open fields or accepting the hospitality wherever it was offered, the Guru and his companions headed for Mathura. The Guru was happy to get away from Delhi with its court intrigues and petty squabbles and ride among the fields under the open sky. Even though it was winter, the sunshine was warm and bright but there was a sharp nip in the air. He looked up and saw that apart from a few cotton white tiny mounds of clouds in the far west, a string of swallows, shaped like a large sythe, floated in the air. Sitting on his horse he watched the gentle intimacy of the scene on both sides, the soft fields bathed in pearly sunshine, the marvellous green of the young leaves and the tender curve of the smoke rising from homes in the way-side villages. It was a scene of

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enormous serenity and peace, a scene of innocence. It evoked memories of his visit to this part of the country some four years earlier. He was happy to be going to these places again and meet old friends and see for himself what progress had been made by the old and new Sangats.

Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at Mathura for a few days and visited Bindraban and other places associated with Lord Krishna. There were far too many images of Krishna, representing every facet of his life to escape the notice of the Guru. They reminded him of Krishna's childish pranks, the youthful escapades with gopis and above all the part he played in the battle between Kauravas and Pandavas. The Guru had at some stage studied Bhagvad Gita, and wandering among the ancient relics, the Guru's thoughts turned to the Bhakti movement Krishna had ennunciated the ideal of selfless actions he had advocated and the rich and noble philosophy of life he had preached. However, he could not accept Krishna's claim as God Himself. God, the Guru mused, was beyond birth and death and how could any man, who had experienced both the joys and sorrows of life and had played his part on the human stage, identify himself with the Ultimate Reality.

From Mathura the Guru and his entourage went to Agra. Agra had been sanctified by the visit of Guru Nanak. Guru Ram Dass had also visited Agra. At one time Bhai Gurdas was sent to Agra to establish a Sikh missionary centre and propagate the faith of Guru Nanak in that area. Bhai Gurdas stayed in Agra for several years and established a flourishing Sangat there. There is an ancient Gurdwara in Agra known as Mai Than Gurdwara. There is a delightful little story associated with this Gurdwara. It is said that an aged lady Mai Bhago or Mai Jassi (the tradition is not certain about her name) had long waited for the arrival of the Guru. She had somehow the feeling that one day the Guru would come and for years she patiently waited for that happy occasion. And at last when he came, her joy knew no bounds. She invited him to her home and with great love and devotion served him with her aged hands. Her withered face, etched with age, glowed like the morning sun. The Guru was touched by her deep affection and stayed in her house for a week.

The Guru also paid a visit to the place where Guru Nanak was supposed to have stayed more than half a century earlier. It was

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a neglected place and there was nothing there to keep alive the memory of Guru Nanak, no relics, mementos or souvenirs. Guru Tegh Bahadur felt sad, but in a strange way, his whole being was filled with the memory of Guru Nanak; he almost sensed his physical presence near him. And when he left Agra and headed for Allahabad and travelled the long serpentine road with shady trees and lush green fields smiling on both sides, images of Guru Nanak, travelling alone or accompanied by Mardana with his rabab slung round his shoulder with a leather strap, rose before his eyes again and again. He almost expected to see Guru Nanak and Mardana sitting under the next cluster of trees, singing the celestial hymns surrounded by a small group of devotees. Sitting lightly on the horseback, he ruminated over the changes that history had wrought since the ascension of Guru Nanak. He thought of his father and the battles he had fought and the way militancy had been forced on a small community of peaceful people devoted wholly to the worship of the Lord. He thought of Guru Nanak travelling thousands of miles on foot, like a Sanyasi, in order to dissuade people from the fruitless worship of idols, images and graves and to restore the worship of the Supreme Being who was the Creator and Preserver of the whole universe. And now, here he was, riding on a horse, with a retinue of trained soldiers, going out to preach and propagate the message of Guru Nanak. And his mind went on musing on the changes that were in store for the followers of his faith in the years to come.

Passing through Etawaha, Kanpur and Fatehpur, Guru Tegh Bahadur reached Prayag. At all these three important towns on the way, the Guru met the sangats and impressed upon them the absolute necessity of keeping the memory of the Lord ever alive in their hearts. In all these towns, gurdwaras were built commemorating the memory of the Guru's visit.

The place where Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at Prayag is known today as Gurdwara Pakka Sangat. It appears that the Guru was particularly fond of this town. He liked to watch the confluence of Ganges and Jamuna and the mythical Saraswati and on the bank of Ganges he was happy to meet Sadhus and Sanyasis and discuss with them the basic principles of their faith. As Sanyasis of various Maths or schools gathered at Prayag, these discussions were heated and lively and many of the participants displayed pride and egotism. This, more often than not, provided the Guru

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excellent opportunities to preach his sermons to the *Yogis*. Many of his hymns addressed to "Sadhos" are the outcome of these meetings. Even when we cast a glance on two hymns in Raga Gauri, beginning with the lines, *Sadho mana ka man tiyago* and *Sadho eh mana gahiyo na jaee*, we are struck with their appropriateness. The first hymn advises the Sanyasis to abjure egotism, lust and violence and avoid the company of evil-minded people. Thereafter the Guru paints the picture of a true Sanyasi or an ideal man: one who is indifferent to pain and pleasure, one who is untouched by praise or blame and one who, conscious of the true essence of life devotes himself to the achievement of the sublime state of Supra-consciousness. With utter humility, the Guru admits that the path of spiritualism that he advocates is hard and it is through the Grace of God that it can be traversed. The hymn is compact and concise; the words pertaining to human weaknesses have been selected with great care and in clear, precise terms it is stated that one who rises above these infirmities, can be said to have understood the true purpose of life. But even such a one needs the grace of God to achieve salvation. To all this is added the arduousness of the journey and immensity of the struggle involved.

In the second hymn, the Guru portrays the mercurial nature of the mind. The restless and covetous human mind makes endless demands and throwing overboard both sense and sensibility, it is filled with endless wrath and violence. The result is that the precious gifts of knowledge and insight are ignored and human judgement is distorted. With such pressures of the mind, not all the efforts of the *Yogis* and not all the chanting of *mantras* by the sages lead to the attainment of the spiritual bliss, or the achievement of *Nirvana*. It is only by the grace of the Lord that man's efforts end in his union with God.

The two hymns are addressed to Yogis. One stresses the need for the seeker of Truth to rise above the demands of the world by the destruction of ego and the other lays emphasis on the control of the mind for the achievement of salvation. The Guru must have noticed that the Yogis, despite their claim based on Yogic exercises suffered both from egotism and the restlessness of the mind. The Guru stayed for a month in Prayag, and delivered several sermons to the Sanyasis and fakirs gathered there.

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Prayag played another important part in the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur which came to be known to historians through Guru Gobind Singh's autobiography entitled "Bachitra Natak." The information belongs to the realm of supra-human knowledge and would have been regarded as mythology had someone other than Guru Gobind Singh written the story. The incident is described by Guru Gobind Singh in his immortal words and hence its authenticity remains beyond question. It has to be admitted that Yogis of the stature of Guru Gobind Singh were cognisant of the life led by them before their birth. In the first part of this epic, the Guru describes his pre-natal life in a powerful metrical verse written in Braj Bhasha. He tells us that he was doing penance on Sapta-sring mountain near Hemkunt and because of the austerities practised by him, his spirit was united with the Supreme Being. His future parents i.e. Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mata Gujri, had for years performed *Tapasya* and meditated on the name of the Lord with great fervour and devotion. The Lord was pleased with the devout worship of his parents. The Supreme Being then commanded Guru Gobind Singh to appear in human form and thus he was born in the Kal Yug. The Guru informs us that he himself was not inclined to assume human form but God commanded him to do. The Lord said :

"I have cherished thee as My son,
And created thee to extend My religion;
Go and spread my religion there,
And restrain the world from senseless acts."

The Guru further tells us :

"The divine Guru sent me for religion's sake :
On this account I have come into this world—
Extend the faith everywhere;
Seize and destroy the evil and the sinful—
Understand this, ye holy men, in your souls.
I assumed birth for this purpose
of Spreading the faith, saving the saints
And extirpating all tyrants."

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In the same vein, he goes on to say that his parents had come to Triveni and it was at that time that his spirit descended into his mother's womb. When we remember that Guru Tegh Bahadur had been married for twenty-seven years and that probably he and his wife had prayed often for the gift of a son, it was surely the result of their penance and devotion that their wish was granted. And what a great gift! A son like Guru Gobind Singh. Verily, when the Lord is pleased, there is no limit to his bounty.

After the stay of a month at Allahabad, Guru Tegh Bahadur and his party left for Banaras. At Banaras the Guru's party camped in a garden outside the city and the gurdwara located at the spot is known as Guru-ka-Bagh. Banaras claimed a well established Sikh Sangat under the stewardship of masand Bhai Jewahri Mal. His name along with many other members of the Banaras Sangat came down to us through the *Hukamnamas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur. As mentioned earlier the Guru was keen to establish personal relations with as many members of a Sangat as he could. It is, however, a pity that beyond their names we know so little about these individuals who served the Guru.

It so happened that Sri Dhar, the horse presented to the Guru by Nawab Saif Ali Khan, fell ill and the Guru addressed a hukamnama to the Sangat of Banaras to look after the horse and to send it to Patna after its recovery from illness. In this *Hukamnama* the Guru mentioned the name of Bhai Jewahri Mal. Banaras being a well established centre of Sikh faith, many *Hukamnamas* were addressed to its Sangat.

Bhai Jewahri Mal's name is also associated with a small spring flowing in the gurdwara at Banaras. The story goes that early one morning when Bhai Jewahri Mal, was leaving his house, the Guru enquired, "Where are you going Bhai Sahib?" He replied, "Sir, I am going for my bath in the river Ganges." The Guru smiled and said, "Why should you go to the Ganges; the Ganges should come to you." Bhai Jewahri Mal was perplexed and looked up at the Guru. He noticed that the Guru's gaze was fixed on a stone in the room. He stepped forward and pulled out the stone and to his utter amazement, a spring gushed forth from underneath the floor. To this day, the spring continues to flow. This is a lovely story. But it raises a question : Would the Guru perform a miracle ? The answer is an unequivocal no. It is felt that it is only an allegorical way of saying that the water of any spring or

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river, when touched by the Guru, is as sacred and pure as that of the Ganges.

Banaras for ages has been one of the most sacred cities of the Hindus and besides pandits, pujaris and pilgrims, it has attracted tourists, travellers and scholars. It is a great pilgrim spot and there is more than one temple dedicated to almost every deity in the Hindu pantheon. Every Hindu sect has a Math or missionary centre there; here come disciples to seek their gurus; here come monks to be initiated or ordained. The scholars and philosophers come to measure their swords, defend their faith and to clear their ideas. People come to live in Banaras; people come to die in Banaras.

Guru Nanak came to Banaras to persuade the people to follow the true marg (path) of religion and to dissuade them from performing empty rituals. Guru Tegh Bahadur came to strengthen the faith and keep alive the traditions of Guru Nanak. The Guru, with his unusual entourage, attracted the Sadhus and scholars and at his meetings they asked questions about his faith and his way of life. Because of these questions, his sermons gained unusual popularity. Day after day, the Guru explained the Sikh way of life; to live in this world, earn one's livelihood through honest hard work and yet remain not only untainted but in tune with the divine music within one's heart. He denounced the ascetics who forsake the world and the monks who wasted their lives hidden in the monastic cells. He sang his famous hymn in Raga Dhanasari, *Kahe re ban Khojan jaee* and preached the futility of seeking God in forests or among mountain peaks. The all-pervading God lives in the heart of man as does fragrance in a rose or reflection in a mirror. He is within us and there we should seek Him. Without contemplation and meditation, and above all *Nam-Simran*, he cannot be found. In the same way, through the use of his own hymns, the Guru explained the nature of this world, the value of human life and the tragic waste of the one golden opportunity granted to him during his sojourn on this earth. Finally the Guru explained to his audience the meaning of *Nam-Simran*. He sang his hymn in Bilawal Raga, *Har-Ke Nam bina dukh Pawai*. *Nam-Simran* is a way of worship; here prayer takes the shape of singing the praises of God. It can be performed at various levels. Most people recite their prayers while bathing or dressing or getting ready for the day's work. It would be foolish altogether to

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condemn this form of prayer. Even this has some value; for a little while the devotee thinks of the Lord, tries to associate himself with the Creator and the repeated performance is bound to influence his life at least to some extent. But when prayer is done in a contemplative mood, in seclusion and quiet surroundings, it begins to influence the thinking processes of the individual, changes the pattern of his life, helps him to detach himself from his surrounding and judges acts and events dispassionately and discriminatingly. In the course of time, he develops a sense of values, an inherent power to distinguish between the true and the false, the permanent and the impermanent, illusion and reality. The scales fall from his eyes and he can see how evanescent and temporary are the world's pleasures, passions and attachments. He becomes a seeker after Truth. He beigns to find a strange peace and happiness in *Nam-Simran* ; he feels light and free and finds it easy to cast off the weary weight of the endless human struggle. He discerns the futility of rituals such as bathing at pilgrim spots, fasting, yogic exercises and offering sacrifices to deities. Through *Nam-Simran*, he overcomes sorrow and suffering. And finally through *Nam-Simran*, the mystic truth is revealed to the devotee. This hymn in Bilawal Raga, describes how step by step, through chanting the praises of the Lord, one becomes *Jiwan-mukta*, the liberated one. Literally *Jiwan-mukta* means liberated while alive. It is the highest stage of spiritual achievement in human life. In *Sukhmani*, Guru Arjun Dev has described in great detail the characteristics of one who is *Jiwan-mukta*. He is one who is untouched by sorrow or happiness, regards gold and dust alike, makes no difference between a king and a beggar and through the grace of the Lord has gained the knowledge of Supreme Truth. Guru Arjun Dev's ideal is very much like the one described by Guru Tegh Bahadur in his hymn in Raga Sorath beginning with the words *Jo nar dukh main dukh nahin manai* (one who by suffering is unperturbed).

Guru Tegh Bahadur delivered many more sermons at Banaras and enlightened the people about the various aspects of Sikh mysticism.

From Banaras the Guru went to Sasaram. The Guru had been there before and was pleased to meet his old followers. In the Sikh annals, Sasaram is associated with a disciple of the Guru popularly known as Chacha (uncle) Phagu. It is said that he built a house with such a high portico that a rider could enter it without

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alighting from his horse. He was sustained by a high hope that one day the Guru will come riding on a horse and bless his house with his presence. Lo, such was the bond that tied the guru with his disciple that one fine evening Guru Tegh Bahadur fulfilled his wish and entered his house riding on a horse. Who could have been happier than Chacha Phagu on that day ?

The Guru's next port of call was Gaya, once a great centre of Buddhism. However, at the time of Guru's visit there were only a handful of Buddhists in Gaya. Buddhism had flourished for a thousand years in India and it was at its zenith during the days of Chandragupta and Ashoka. But tradition and caste proved too strong for it and even though it gained acceptance in Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Tibet, China and Japan, it rapidly declined in India. When the great Gupta Empire disintegrated towards the end of the seventh century, it lost its vitality and was soon swept away by the organised forces of Brahminism. Except for the tiny pockets of religious faith here and there, it almost disappeared from India.

Guru Tegh Bahadur spent a few days at Gaya and as usual delivered sermons at his prayer meetings. As his meetings were generally attended by a considerable number of Brahmins and Buddhists, he often explained, even though in a cursory manner, the distinguishing features of Sikhism from Hinduism and Buddhism. Hinduism, he felt, had been stultified by casteism and the stranglehold of the priests. Casteism had de-humanised the Hindu faith and the priests or Brahmins had over-burdened it with innumerable rituals. There was another factor which had mitigated its influence or impact on the people and that was Sanskrit, the language in which its scriptures and hymns had been recorded. So long as Sanskrit was a living language, spoken by the people, the masses understood and appreciated the prayers they recited and the religious ceremony in which they participated. But at a later stage, Sanskrit became the language of the learned and a special preserve of the Brahmins. People did not understand it and consequently, they lost all direct relationship with the emotional and spiritual aspects of the daily prayers. In due course of time, the immortal Vedas and the great Upanishads were lost to the large masses of people. Religion took the form of rituals, sacrifices, fasts and pilgrimages—mostly rituals at births, deaths, marriages, betrothels, etc. Prayer consisted mostly in making offerings to deities and circumambulations or ringing of bells. Scriptural

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readings or recitation of prayers was left to the pujaris. Pujaris were interested in collecting money and the greater the number of rites and rituals, the greater was their income. So ritualism gained precedence over everything else. As a result of casteism, ritualism and the supremacy of the Brahmin, Hinduism became a way of life rather than a religion. One could be a Hindu even if he believed in one God or hundred gods or in no god at all. All he had to do was to observe certain formalities and perform certain rituals on specific occasions.

It was only when the Bhakti movement started and many Saints and holy men wrote their hymns in the vernacular languages that Hinduism came to be re-vitalised.

Buddhism, on the other hand, suffered from certain inherent weaknesses. Buddhist doctrine is based upon two axioms : first, all life is sorrow and two, always keep the path of the mean—the middle path between the two extremes. The two extremes are, "That conjoined with the passions and luxuries, low, vulgar, common, ignoble and useless ; and that conjoined with self-torture, painful, ignoble and useless." Besides the two axioms, the Buddha preached the four noble Truths and the Eight-fold path. The four Noble Truths are described in the following words, "This is the noble Truth of pain; birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, sorrows, lamentation, dejection and despair are suffering. Contact with unpleasant things is suffering ; not getting what one craves is suffering. In brief the five groups of clinging are suffering. Now this is the noble Truth of the cause of suffering : verily it is this thirst, the craving for existence, the enjoyment that leads to renewed re-births, seeking satisfaction ; now in one way, now in another. It is craving for gratification of the passions, the craving for existence in the present life or hereafter, or the craving for annihilation.

Now this is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering; verily, it is the complete destruction, conquering, annihilation of craving.

Now this is the Noble Truth which leads to the cessation of suffering; verily, it is this noble Eight-fold path, namely, right views, right aspirations, right speech, right deeds, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."

Two more aspects of Buddhism need to be mentioned. For the Buddha, *Nirvana* meant a life of purity and detachment. He declared, "*Nirvana* is where precepts of justice and morality are

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followed : when fire of greed, of hatred and of delusion and the flames of all other passions are extinguished, then *Nirvana* is reached." Secondly, the Buddha did not believe in the existence of God or Ishwara. His main reason for the disbelief in God was the existence of sorrow and suffering in the world. "If the world had been made by Ishwara, there should be no such things as sorrow or calamity or sin for both pure and impure deeds must come from him. If not, there would be another cause besides him and he would not be the self-existent one. Thus, you see, the thought of Ishwara is overthrown."

Buddhism appears to have been obsessed with sorrow and it could not conceive the purpose of life in any other terms except the means of escape from suffering. For the Buddha, true religion consisted, "in causing as little suffering as possible and in doing as much good as possible and in showing love and compassion, truthfulness and purity as far as possible." It was a religion based on ethics and the cultivation of the mind. It studied the world in terms of the law of causation. As it did not believe in Atma (soul), it could not conceive of its relation with Parmatma (God).

The bane of Buddhism was its rational and intellectual approach. It did not recognise the limits of human intellect or ratiocination. Religion is a worship of higher powers which are beyond the reach of intellectual processes. Anything becomes simple when it is reduced to its fundamentals. There are two fundametals of religion : faith and worship. Faith or belief must exist that the Being worshipped is capable of supplying the needs. Secondly, there must be conviction that the powers worshipped are higher powers. In this way, faith and worship demand the existence of God. This triangle of God, belief and worship are the necessary concomitants of every religion. And, finally, it may be added that the higher powers (God) are worshipped with the object of cultivating a relation with them. Buddhism, in denying the existence of God, did away with faith and worship as well. Essentially, it was not a religion but a philosophy based on ethical living and cultivation of the mind. It had no future in India when it lost the backing of State power because the whole cultural heritage of India is based on the quest of the human soul for its union with the ultimate Reality; the merging of the Atma with Parmatma.

A word or two may be said about pain and suffering. Suffering is the fire that purifies the soul ; suffering is essential for

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identifying oneself with the pain of others ; it is a bond between human beings. Suffering and sacrifice go together ; both are essential for the achievement of certain goals. Some brave ones sacrifice themselves on the altar of freedom so that others may lead free lives. The great martyrs undergo torture and death so that men may gain the freedom to worship the gods of their own choice. On the spritual plane, penance is necessary for the awakening of the inner-self.

Sikhism did away with the caste system because it was against the first cosmic law that all men are equal and also because it accepted the rights of man as a human being. It denounced the *pujaris* and rituals because the former exploited the poor and the ignorant and the latter had no relations with the spiritual quest of man. Sikhism condemned intellectualism because the world of Spirit was beyond the reach of human mind. It advocated the worship of the one and only God who could be reached through love and devotion. In this manner, the Guru explained many features of the Sikh faith to his audiences.

Once again Guru Tegh Bahadur set out on his journey. The days were getting warm and travelling was mainly done during the early hours of the morning. He loved to ride in the soft and tender light of the morning, the river murmuring its soft music on his right and the green fields with the pearly dew stretching on his left as far as the eye could see. The rising sun shot out blood-red streaks across the sky heralding its mighty presence. Soon the countryside would begin to stir and he would watch the farmers going out to the fields with their teams of oxens. Sometimes he would meet gaily dressed men, women and children crowded in bullock-carts going to attend some village fair. Occasionally a marriage party would pass by with the bridegroom with his brocaded cloak and silken turban riding on a horse followed by musicians playing on drums and pipes. Sometimes people standing on the road-side would bow to him and he would raise his hand and bless them. On his way to Patna, he stayed at Nalanda and Rajgriha and carried on his missionary work. Towards the middle of May, 1666, he reached Patna. The Sangat of Patna came out to receive him on the outskirts of the city. There was great rejoicing and the city was decorated with arches, buntings and flags. The Patna Sangat had been waiting for long for the Guru's arrival and as reports about his journey were received from Gaya and

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Nalanda, increasing number of people from the surrounding areas came to Patna to give a rousing reception to Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru was given a hero's welcome and he was at first lodged in a garden which to this day is known as *Guru ka Bagh*. Later on the Guru shifted to the house of Bhai Jaitha, who by profession was a confectioner. According to the ancient lore, Bhai Jaitha was deeply religious person but, being a simple soul, was generally unmindful of the cleanliness of his garments. Some of the Guru's disciples complained to the Guru about Bhai Jaitha's uncleanliness but the Guru explained that Bhai Jaitha was a true Sikh, who meditated on the Name of the Lord and spent his life in the service of the people even though his clothes were occasionally dirty. It was the simplicity of his life and the purity of his faith that made him superior to all those who were only concerned with external cleanliness.

Patna was an ancient and historical city famous as a centre of trade and commerce. Like the mythical Phoenix, it had risen out of its ashes many a time with renewed vitality and vigour. At the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur's arrival, it was known as a great commercial centre. Patna had been sanctified by the visit of Guru Nanak and its Sangat was among the earliest having been set up by Guru Amar Das. It had grown to be a rich, powerful and well organised Sangat. Its leader was Bhai Dyal Das who was addressed as Bhai Sahib (brother) by Guru Tegh Bahadur in many of his *hukamnamas*. In one of his *hukamnamas*, the Guru had, in no uncertain terms, stated that the word of Bhai Dyal Das was to be considered as the order of the Guru. It indicates the high esteem in which he was held by the Guru. The names of many members of the Patna Sangat have come down to us through the *hukamnamas* of the Guru. Some of the prominent names are Bhai Ram Rai, Bhai Durbari, Bhai Mehar Chand, Bhai Murli Dhar and Bhai Chand Sukh.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was deeply attached to city of Patna and mentioned it as the 'home of the guru' in one of his letters.

The Guru spent four rainy months in Patna. But, it appears, that he was driven by some spiritual energy to accomplish the task for which he had come to the East. He was a man in a hurry. He wanted to rejuvenate old Sangats, establish new ones and organise the whole system into a well-knit organisation. At the same time, he wanted to propagate the faith and make

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the people understand the fundamentals, the basic principles of Sikh philosophy. He was no longer satisfied with the usual advice about the purity of life, and the virtue of prayers but he explained at his prayer meetings the how and why of life, the meaning of *Nam*, *Onkar*, *Shabad*, *Hukam*, *Sehaj* and the Sikh concept of God and the steps necessary for the achievement of Mukti. He wanted to remove the weaknesses that had crept in during the pontification of Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkrishen. He acted as a systematic and powerful organiser as well as a mystic concerned with the spiritual life of his disciples. Sensitive to the political trends in the country, he wanted his followers to be ready for the challenges that lay ahead. He made preparations to travel all over Bihar, Bengal and Assam and personally contact all the men he could. In the meantime, Bhai Sukh Dyal, along with some other members of Dacca Sangat, came to invite the Guru to visit Dacca and requested him to fulfil the long cherished desire of the people who had been waiting for his blessed presence among them. The Guru accepted the invitation and promised to be with them in the near future.

On his way to Dacca, the first place where the Guru camped was Monghyr. Letters were sent to the masands of Allahabad, Banaras, Mirzapur and Patna to come to Monghyr for a regional Conference. To Bhai Dyal Das in Patna, the Guru wrote: "My blessing to the whole Sangat; may their wishes be fulfilled. We have camped at Monghyr. It is time for *Sangat* to serve. Bhai Sahib, bring all the Masands and *Sangat* with you to Monghyr. May they prosper and serve the cause of the Panth. The word of Dyal Das should be accepted as the command of the Guru. The Guru will fulfil the desire of all disciples. One thing more. Acquire some tents for our *dera* from Shahzadpur. I leave the arrangement to you. Also send forty Behari turbans; also twenty turbans worth forty rupees. May the *Sangat* flourish in prosperity." The Guru stayed for some weeks at Monghyr and at the Conference issued instructions about the type of organisation he wanted to set up at all the centres. He wanted to impart some kind of semi-military character to these organisations so that they could be of use when troubles arose. On his way to Dacca, he visited Bhagalpur, Sahibganj, Malda, and other towns. At all these places, he met his disciples and stressed the need for discipline and unity. In

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this way the Guru built up a considerable following all over Bihar and set up many new centres of Sikh faith.

Dacca was a highly flourishing trade centre during the Mughal times. It was not only famous for its muslin but a great variety of cloth and its artisans were known for many kinds of handicrafts. It enjoyed a high reputation for its educational institutions, libraries, cultural activities and also for its gardens and bazars. The Dacca *Sangat* was the richest in Eastern India and most of its members were traders and shop keepers. When the *Sangat* learnt about the impending visit of the Guru, they built a new house for his stay in Dacca. They also made elaborate arrangements for the Guru's reception. He was taken in a large procession through the rich bazars of Dacca and was taken to the place of his stay in Sangat Tola lane. Every member of the Sangat offered presents to the Guru and received his blessings. It may be added that Bhai Bulaki Dass was the Masand of Dacca and Bhai Natha was a leading Sikh and the two together were responsible for all the arrangements made for Guru's stay in Dacca.

It is said that the aged mother of Bhai Bulaki Das was a woman of great piety and devotion. She had with her own hands woven some cloth and stitched a garment with the fond hope that when the Guru will come, she will present the garment and have the pleasure of seeing him wear it. She had to wait for years for the fulfilment of her wish. But when, at last, the Guru came, accepted her present and came to visit her home dressed in her garment, her joy knew no bounds; it was like a dream come true.

The Guru attended the prayer meetings every day and delivered sermons and exchanged ideas with the *Sangat*. There was something compelling about him; the people were drawn to him not only by his words of wisdom but by his love and compassion and above all by a kind of spiritual grandeur that he carried about him. It was something intangible, invisible and yet it had a magnetism of its own.

The Guru stayed a year in Dacca and visited many places around it. His sermons attracted large audiences and there was hardly any aspect of Sikh theology which he did not expound. But above all, he preached dispassion (Vairaga) as the surest means of attaining union with God. The human desires and attachment with the world were the two primary causes of human pain and misery and the only way to overcome them was through *Nam-*

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Simran, which in turn led to a longing for the Lord resulting in peace and contentment. He sang many of his own hymns portraying the impermanence of life and the emptiness of the pleasures of the world and taught in simple yet moving words the ecstasy and joy of Divine love.

The Guru's stay at Dacca also became memorable because it was here that he received the news of the birth of his son Gobind Das, who was later called Gobind Rai and finally, when at Anandpur he established the holy order of the Khalsa, he changed his own name to Gobind Singh and came to be remembered in history as Guru Gobind Singh. Bhai Dyal Das had arranged to send the news to Dacca as speedily as possible by messengers who kept changing horses at every halting place. There was great rejoicing at Dacca and prayers were offered to Almighty for his graciousness. The Guru wrote a personal letter of thanks to the Sangat at Patna. "My blessing to all the members of Patna Sangat and may God fulfil their wishes. The Patna Sangat has spent money to celebrate the birth of Gobind Das; all their offerings are accepted by the Guru and every silver coin will be deemed as a gold coin in the court of God. Services rendered so far are accepted and those who will serve in future will be blessed. May God bless you all with prosperity. I am sending a robe of honour for Bhai Dyal Das. Patna is the home of the Guru. May God bless the Sangat of Patna."

It is but natural that the Guru's thoughts turned to his family and its needs. He addressed another letter to Patna in which he advised the *Sangat* to buy a large house for his family in which they all could live comfortably. He wrote : "it should be a fine house and it should be a big one for the stay of my family. God will bless the business of the Sangat. This is the time for the Sangat to serve."

At Dacca, the Guru planned his tour of Bengal. He wanted to visit all those places which had been sanctified by Guru Nanak and also set up many new Sangats with a view to winning over the sensitive and emotionally charged people of Bengal. They were a deeply religious people and susceptible to new ideas. It was possible to sow the seed of revolution among them which may some time in the future fructify and help the cause of liberation. The Guru had also the feeling that probably that was the last time he

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would be propagating his faith in that region and wanted to cover as large an area as possible.

The Guru spent a whole year visiting places among the Jantia Hills and the districts of Sylhet and Chittagong. The country was full of rivers, streams and canals and at many places forests had to be crossed and hills and mountains to be climbed. Though the journey was long and arduous, it was certainly rewarding. Everywhere he was cordially received and he had the satisfaction of seeing some of the old *Sangats* still functioning in these far off places. For the few disciples who lived at these places, the visit of the Guru was like the sudden bursting of a fountain of fresh water in a desert. It was a day to be preserved in the memory of generations. The Guru set up a string of new centres all over Bengal. His sincerity, unadulterated love and earnestness touched the hearts of the people and many of them became his followers. And when the Guru returned to Dacca, he felt happy and contented with the task accomplished.

While Guru Tegh Bahadur was at Dacca, there arrived Raja Ram Singh of Amber at the head of a large Mughal army. Raja Ram Singh was the son of Raja Jai Singh who had befriended both Guru Harkrishen and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Raja Jai Singh was dead and his son had ascended the gaddi. Raja Ram Singh had been sent by Aurangzeb to reestablish the Mughal authority in Assam and recapture Gauhati from where the Ahom ruler had driven out the Mughals in December, 1667. Aurangzeb was playing a double game; he had appointed Raja Ram Singh as the leader of this expedition more as a punishment than as a reward for his services. Ever since the escape of Shivaji from the custody of Raja Ram Singh, he was under disgrace and had not been permitted to attend the court and his monthly allowance was discontinued. But the situation changed when Aurangzeb received the news about the capture of Gauhati by the Ahoms. Raja Ram Singh was popular among the Rajput princes and Aurangzeb did not wish to antagonise them any further. The cunning and wily emperor thought it best to send Raja Ram Singh on this dangerous expedition so that if he was killed, the Emperor would be rid of a powerful Rajput prince but if, perchance, he succeeded in conquering Assam, another province would be added to the Emperor's kingdom. So he sent for Raja Ram Singh, presented him a Khilat and appointed him as the commander of the

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expedition. He also appointed many Muslim generals under the Raja who were expected to keep a watch on him and keep the emperor informed.

The assignment was dangerous for a variety of reasons. The terrain was difficult: it was full of mighty rivers, uncharted forests and high mountains. The Ahoms were fierce warriors and like all other hill tribes, zealously guarded their independence and distrusted the people of the plains. They had established their reputation as bold and daring soldiers by defeating Mir Jumla, the famous Mughal commander in 1665. But above all, the land of Kamrup was famous for witchcraft and sorcery. It was commonly believed that the Ahoms employed witches and magicians for the defeat of their enemies.

Raja Ram Singh was fully conscious of the dangers that lay ahead and had been warned about the use of witchcraft by the Ahoms. He personally did not believe in sorcery, black art or witchcraft but some of his Muslim generals insisted that some pirs or maulvis should be taken with them to counteract the supernatural forces that may be employed by the Ahoms. So at Malda, he employed five Muslim pirs who remained with the Mughal forces all through the campaign. His wife had, however, advised her husband to take Guru Tegh Bahadur with him as the surest defence against supernatural powers and unknown dangers. Both the Raja and his wife had met Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi and knew about his penance at Bakala and, therefore, regarded him as a great saint and spiritual leader.

Raja Ram Singh met Guru Tegh Bahadur at Dacca and after paying obeisance and offering many presents he had brought for the Guru, with great humility and reverence, he requested the Guru to accompany him to Assam. The Guru found it difficult to refuse his request because of the longstanding friendship between the two families. Early in 1669, the two of them set out for Assam.

Crossing the river Brahamputra, the Guru stayed at Dhubri, where the present gurdwara of Dhamdhama is located, while Raja Ram Singh moved on to Rangamati. In the initial battles, the Ahoms could not face the well-trained cavalry of the Mughals and avoiding pitched battles, they took to guerilla tactics. Desultory skirmishes continued for some months. The Ahoms, it is said, pressed in all their magical resources. Delightful stories are told

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how the Ahom king, Chakradhwaj, invited all his magicians to use spells and incantations to destroy his enemies. When all the wizards and magicians failed to do anything, he called the most reputed sorceress of Assam, Neta Dhoban, to hurl huge rocks on the enemy and crush them. But, the story goes, she failed to unnerve the Mughal forces. Her failure is attributed to the presence of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Be that as as it may, as the rainy season drew nearer, it became clear to both parties that it was going to be a long and protracted war. The Mughal forces pushed forward and laid a siege of the city of Gauhati. But the Mughal generals knew that the rains would definitely help the Ahoms because they were used to them and were fighting on a terrain with which they were familiar. All the same, there was considerable anxiety on both sides.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was essentially a man of peace and hated wars which brought so much destruction and caused a great deal of misery and suffering among the people. He kept to his routine of congregational meeting and daily sermons. His reputation spread and even Ahoms came to attend his prayer meetings. The Guru sent out feelers on both sides and quietly arranged a meeting between Raja Ram Singh and Raja Chakradhwaj and impressed upon them the futility of waging war between them when the profit would accrue to Aurangzeb. After some parleys, the two parties were reconciled to the term of peace suggested by the Guru and peace was declared. The two Rajas exchanged turbans as a symbol of brotherly love. The Guru, it is said, thrust a dagger (Khanjar), in the ground to mark the dividing line between the territories of the two powers at a place which came to be known as Khanjarpura. As a token of their regard, the soldiers of both the forces carried earth on their shields and raised a large mound at Dhubri which is regarded as a monument commemorating the reconciliation brought about by Guru Tegh Bahadur. Later on a gurdwara was built at this place.

The Guru took leave of the two Rajas and returned to Dacca. From Dacca the Guru headed straight for Calcutta staying at many places on the way and at all these places, he set up new *Sangats*. At Calcutta he stayed at the Gurdwara known as *Chhoti Sangat* and delivered many sermons. From Calcutta the Guru went to Puri passing through Balasore, Cuttack, Bhuvaneswar. At all these places he stayed for a few days and preached the word

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of God. At Puri, the Guru stayed for a fortnight. Puri, being a great religious centre, was full of pandits and pujaris. As at other religious centres, the Guru exchanged ideas with learned men and delivered many sermons. It was at Puri that the Guru learnt about the terror let loose by Aurangzeb and the destruction of temples and mass conversion of Hindus that were taking place in Northern India. The Guru decided to return home as speedily as possible so that he could be among his followers during that unhappy and critical period.

There are three versions about his return journey. Some historians are of the view that the Guru returned to Patna and after spending a few days with his family and having the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing his son Gobind Rai for the first time, he left for Delhi. There is another group of writers who believe that in his anxiety to get back to Punjab without any loss of time, he cut short his tour and returned to Delhi without meeting his son and other members of the family. He, however, sent instructions to his brother-in-law Kirpal Chand to take the family to Lakhnaur via Ayodhya, Lucknow, Nanakmata and Hardwar. It was at Lakhnaur that the father and son met for the first time. There is yet another group of biographers who say that it was after returning to Chak Nanaki and spending two years there that the Guru sent for his son Gobind Rai. According to them, Gobind Rai reached Chak Nanaki some time in March 1673, and so great was the happiness of the father on meeting his son that to commemorate the occasion, he changed the name of Chak Nanaki to Anandpur. Some day the future historians will unravel the mystery but there is no denying the fact that it must have been a great moment for the father and the son to greet each other for the first time and get together to shape the future history of India. It was a memorable occasion and must have been celebrated with all the pomp and show that the Sangat could muster.

Let us turn back to the story of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He reached Delhi on the 20th June, 1670. Once again he was kept under police vigilance for two months and thirteen days. He was not imprisoned but he was not permitted to leave Delhi and his movements were restricted. During his stay at Delhi Nawab Saif Ali Khan came to see him and went with him to Chak Nanaki when the Guru was permitted to leave Delhi. The Guru also met Rani Pushpa Devi, the mother of Raja Ram Singh and informed

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her about the end of the war in Assam and assured her about the speedy return of her son. Travelling by stages and meeting his followers at Rohtak, Jind, Lakhnaur and Kiratpur, he reached Chak Nanaki some time in October 1670.

The Guru had been away for five years. He had travelled far and wide and blazed the trail of the new faith and spread the message of Satnam among varied people and at distant places. He set up new *Sangats* and strengthened and revived the vigour of old ones. He changed the temper of the people by his gift of bows and arrows. He rid men of fear by his message of "Fear none and do not frighten anyone." He sowed the seed that would raise soldiers and horsemen when the clarion call would come. He broke bread with the poor and changed the pattern of their lives. He fulfilled the long cherished hopes of many and made them intensely happy. He helped people to overcome their difficulties and turn to a dynamic faith that never faltered in the face of tyranny. He rid the people of the power of magic and sorcery and freed them from the clutches of charlatons and mountebanks. He sang his noble hymns and through his message of non-attachment and dispassion (*Vairaga*) gave a new insight into the meaning and purpose of life. And all those who came in touch with him felt a strange glow in their hearts which made them face the ordeals of life with greater equanimity than ever before.

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7

The Martyr

During Guru Tegh Bahadur's absence on his long tour to eastern India, the town of Anandpur took shape and by the time he returned, it was humming with activity. The gurdwara and the Guru's house on the top of the hill had been completed, so also were most of the houses and shops. Though some constuction work was still being done on the periphery of the town, they were the houses of people recently arrived and it was part of a process that was to continue for some years to come. Anandpur was a quiet little town at the foot of Shivalik hills, with the dark green background of a dense forest. When the breeze blew in the morning and evening, a whispering sound of large leaves filled the air and the leaves, fluffy white on one side and pale-green on the other, glistened in the slanting rays of the sun. Far in the distant, on the hill top stood an unending line of tall trees silhouetted as sentinels against the dark blue sky. It was a compact little town, fairly well-planned in terms of those far-off days. Like-minded people had left their homes and had come to start a new life there. Naturally a kind of *espirt de corps*, a bonhomie, a cheerful friendliness came to manifest itself among the residents. A general sense of brotherhood pervaded and the stress was more on 'good-life' than on 'economic competitiveness' or 'money-making'. The gentler skies and the green belt around the town lent a soft touch to the city and the odd mixture of happy living and spiritual well-being made the residents feel that Anandpur was really a city of bliss.

The gurdwara and the Guru's residence were the nerve-centre of the town and provided, in more than one way, its tone, colour and mode of thinking as though they were the *raison d'etre* of its

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very existence. To the gurdwara came men and women, in ones and twos long before the sunrise, when the trees and houses had hardly taken shape in the softening darkness of the morning and, with folded hands and half-shut eyes, entered quietly and took their places among the congregation. The earthen lamps with tapering wicks shed soft light and sent wavering shadows fluttering against the walls. The presence of the Guru and the aged priest with his long white flowing beard and immaculate white clothes, sitting behind the holy Granth, lent a rare charm to the reading of the scripture and the singing of the hymns. The spirits soared high and a strange peace descended upon them. And when the Guru delivered his sermon in a quiet, solemn voice, it had a heal-touch about it. It came as a balm on anguished souls and brought rest to feverish minds and their unending demands. He generally spoke about life and death; the how and why of life, the way the great gift of life had to be utilised and the way maximum benefit could be derived from the unique opportunity of having been born as a human being. Human life was infinitely superior to animal existence; it should not be exclusively devoted to eating, drinking and pleasure hunting. Seek within yourself, he would say, and you will find wealth beyond your dreams, a happiness that will fill your whole being. The human struggle will cease and the eternal hunger will be appeased. You will experience a calm, a restfulness you have never known. And death, thereafter, will no longer be something to be dreaded; it will be received as a friend; it would mean the beginning of a new life and perchance, the end of the cycle of Samsara like the meeting of a river with the sea after a long long journey And finally, when they stood, with folded hands and bowed heads, and *Ardas* was recited and every heart beseeched for the Grace of G d, they felt sure of His benediction and loving protection. After the congregational meeting, one by one, they went home carrying their share of happiness in their hearts.

The Baisakhi of the year 1671 was a memorable day for the residents of Anandpur. From all over the Punjab, people came to participate in the festival. The Guru had been away for five years and they all wanted to have his *darshan* and blessings. Representatives of various *Sangats*, Masands, from far and near and Sikh traders from distant places came and offered presents and subscriptions. The houses and shops were decorated and the

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town wore a festive air. For many nights, rows of lighted candles and earthen lamps burnt brightly over the house tops and gave the town the semblance of a diamond necklace. An unending stream of people went to the gurdwara where Kirtan parties sang hymns throughout the day and the best part of the night. A free kitchen supplied meals to all the visitors. Many leading Sikhs met the Guru and learnt about the working of the *Sangats* in the far-flung places recently visited by the Guru. The Guru addressed the congregation on several occasions and gave them his own assessment of the socio-political conditions in the country and warned them about the dangers that lay ahead. Repeatedly, and with a pronounced vigour, he preached his message of unity, organisation and fearlessness.

After staying for nearly two years at Anandpur, Guru Tegh Bahadur felt that it was time to tour some parts of the Punjab and revitalise the organisational centre there. News about the forcible conversion of Hindus and the destruction of their temples were pouring in from different parts of the country and the Guru felt that the axe would fall on the people of Punjab soon. It was therefore, essential to forewarn the people and so organise and fortify the faith of his followers that when the full force of Aurangzeb's fanaticism was unleashed, they should withstand the attack and survive it. To this task, he devoted all his energies. He sent out his trusted lieutenant all over the country to inform, educate and prepare the people for the type of challenges they might have to face. He issued instructions that arrangements should once again be made for a long tour he planned to undertake.

Early in 1673, he set out for another tour of Bangar Desh and Malwa. His *modus operandi* was the same; he visited the same places; he mostly met the same people and yet the tempo and the temper were different. There was a sense of greater urgency calling for action and immediate attention.

He had been to Bangar Desh twice before and the response of the people to the new faith had been encouraging. Though backward and superstitious, they were essentially simple, hardy and brave people. He felt drawn to them and wanted once again to see the work that the *Sangats* were doing there and help them to enlarge their area of influence.

It is a pity that no reliable account of this tour has been maintained, all that has been handed down are a few incidents and

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stories in the form of *Sakhis*. The Guru first went to Saifabad and spent a few days with his old friend Saif Ali Khan. There was much in common between the Guru and the Nawab : both were deeply religious men and spent a lot of their time in spiritual pursuits. They occasionally discussed religious and philosophical problems but it was the quiet companionship of each other that they enjoyed more than anything else. It was as though words were not needed to exchange thoughts and experiences : they just sat together and shared the peace of natural surroundings. Now and then, the political situation was discussed. The Nawab hated as much as the Guru the policy of religious persecution pursued by Aurangzeb but he expressed his helplessness. At the same time, he warned the Guru to be careful and not to antagonise the Emperor in any way. He had personally known the Emperor and watched him from close quarters. The Nawab told the Guru that Aurangzeb was cunning, cruel and merciless and never forgave his enemies. It would be unwise and foolish to trust him. The Guru explained that he had no political ambitions, no clash of interests with Aurangzeb; all that he wanted was to preach and propagate the word of God and help the poor and the needy. The two men understood and appreciated each other and at the same time, both had, in their own individual ways, come to the conclusion that the future was full of dangers and hazards. But this did not in any way depress them; they both had profound trust in God and believed that in the final analysis, it is His will (*Hukam*) that would prevail. The Guru took leave of the Nawab and thanked him for his courtesy and hospitality.

During his tour, he camped at more than a hundred places in Malwa and Bangar Desh. Each place had its own problems, its own conditions and its own developmental stage in relation to the Sikh faith. The Guru stayed at some places for a couple of days and at others for a fortnight depending upon the demands of the people and the conditions prevailing there. At each place the Guru held his congregational meetings, delivered sermons, held consultations with the Masands or leading Sikhs and helped the people to overcome their difficulties. At Mulowal, he helped people to dig a number of wells until, in place of brakish water, they found pure and drinkable water; at Hadiyar where people suffered from swollen necks, he helped them overcome the epidemic by the introduction of hygienic safeguards; at Talwandi, now

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known as Damdama, he arranged for the digging of a tank known as Gurusar. Some stories have come to be associated with certain towns such as the story of thieves who came to Bhatinda to steal the Guru's horse but were stricken with blindness when they approached the horse. When taken to the Guru, they begged forgiveness and promised to forsake their ignoble profession. The merciful Guru pardoned them and restored their eye-sight. Leaving aside such fables and allegories, one thing is absolutely clear that it was a tremendously successful tour and crowds followed the Guru wherever he went. In Bangar Desh, people were attracted by the Guru's piety, saintliness and devotion and his readiness to help them. In Malwa, the people were charmed by his noble bearing, his magnificent personality, his unusal combination of a soldier and a saint, his fearlessness and the gifts of swords, bows and arrows he bestowed upon them and above all by the deep, devotional atmosphere that prevailed at his congregational meetings. The charisma of his personality cast a spell on the people and hundreds were converted to his faith and hundreds followed him as his soldiers or attendants. His tremendous popularity had two unfortunate effects : it made the local officers nervous and they sent exaggerated and misleading reports to Mughal authorities at Delhi and, secondly, it misled some of the historians about the activities, aims and ideals of the Guru. So far as the official reports are concerned, they finally led to the arrest of the Guru and we shall discuss them in detail a little later. But it is amazing and disconcerting that some modern historians so blindly accepted the concocted version of the events as described in Gulam Husain's *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin* that they completely went off the track and altogether misjudged the aims and objective of the Guru's mission. Gulam Hussain wrote, "This man (Guru Tegh Bahadur) finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people, became aspiring; and he united his concern with one Hafyz—aadeem, a Mohammadan fakir..... These two men no sooner saw themselves followed by multitudes, implicitly addicted to their Chief's will, than forsaking every honest calling, they fell to subsisting by plunder and rapine, laying waste the whole province of Punjab.". Cunningham swallowed the bait together with the hook and the line and wrote, "Tegh Bahadur followed the example of his father with unequal steps, and that, choosing for his haunts the wastes between Hansi and the Sutlej he subsisted himself and his disciples by plunder, in a way, indeed,

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that rendered him unpopular with the peasantry." In the same vein Trumpp wrote, "The Guru appears by no means as a humble spiritual instructor, but riding at the front of well-armed disciples... made predatory incursions on the Mohammadan population." It is probably the writings of Cunnnigham and Trumpp which influence Pincott to say, "It is certain that Tegh Bahadur spent his life in violent antagonism to the Muslim ruler of the country" and J.N. Sarkar, to conclude that Guru Tegh Bahadur "actually fought in the Mughal army." But recently when the historians took the trouble to unearth the details of Hafiz Adam's life, they found that there was no connection between Hafiz Adam and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Hafiz Adam was no doubt some sort of religious leader who had engineered a minor rebellion against the Mughal authorities but he was banished from India by Emperor Shah Jahan in 1642 and he left for pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina and died there in 1643. In other words, his death took place twenty-one years before Guru Tegh Bahadur became the apostolic head of the Sikh church and thirty-two years before his martyrdom. It is obvious that the whole story was concocted by Gulam Hussain who was a court historian-cum-a newsletter writer whose primary object was to please the Emperor and denigrate all his opponents. It is, however, possible that all these historians, Cunningham, Trumpp, Pincott and Sarkar were carried away by the statement in *Siyar-ul-Mutakharin* because of its contemporaneity, but it is surprising how could they believe that a man who spent years in meditation and whose writings preached *Vairaga* (dispassion) and *tyaga* (renunciation) could be a brigand or freebooter or a plunderer. How little they understood the idealism of the Guru and the objectives of his mission !

Before we deal with the reports sent to Aurangzeb about the popularity of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the possibility of his raising the standard of rebellion and the orders issued by the Emperor, it would be worthwhile to glance briefly on the forces that were responsible for the religious policy of Aurangzeb. It was this policy that played a dominant role in shaping the history of his reign, sowing the seed of rebellion in different parts of the country and for the mounting hatred and disloyalty of the non-Muslims towards the Emperor. When we look back, we notice that Akbar deliberately followed a liberal policy because he accepted India as his home and all its people, irrespective of their religion or faith,

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as his subjects. He strove hard to make his Turk, Afghan and Pathan courtiers and noblemen to adopt the same outlook. He married Rajput princesses with a view to making Rajputs feel as members of the family. He sought to remove all discriminatory treatment between Muslims and Hindus. He abolished *Jizya* and other discriminatory taxes against the non-Muslims. Public services were no longer the exclusive preserve of the Muslims; non-Muslims were employed in every department of the Government and some of them rose to occupy the highest positions in the Court. There was complete freedom of worship and forcible conversions were totally banned. Poets, painters, musicians, dancers and craftsmen of all communities were equally patronised. Akbar used to invite divines and theologians of all religions and discuss with them different aspects of their faiths. It may, however, be mentioned that not all the Ulemas and Maulvis approved the liberal approach of the Emperor and often criticised and opposed him. With the death of Akbar, a wind of change began to blow; liberalism went to the background and orthodoxy occupied the front seat. But, on the whole, Jehangir and Shah Jahan did not permit the religious leaders to influence them in a big way. But the trouble was brewing all the time and it came in the forefront in the person of Sheikh Ahmed (1564-1624) son of Shaikh Abdul Ahad Faruqi Kabuli Naqshbandi, who called himself Mujahid Alf-i-Sani and claimed to be a Qayyum (accredited spiritual guide) and the *qutb* (polestar of the faith). Claiming his descent from the second Caliph Umar, he set himself as the highest spiritual leader of the orthodox Muslims, particularly of the Sunni sect. In every age such self-appointed religious leaders have arisen, who, through their fierce bigotry, morbid orthodoxy and fiery speeches swayed and gained complete hold on the ignorant masses. Their *modus operandi* is to frighten their audiences by invoking the wrath of God and the fear of hell-fire. Such a one was Sheikh Ahmed and during the reign of Jehangir; he openly denounced all the policies of Akbar and demanded that Hindus should be treated as *Kafirs*. He openly expressed his happiness at the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and declared that Sikhism was a religion of the *Kafirs* and should be suppressed. His followers were known as *Shuhoodees* because he was an outstanding exponent of *Wahdut-ul-Shuhood*, a doctrine that regarded the world as a gift of God, in which He did not pervade because He was "beyond the Beyond." His greatest stress was on

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Shari'at, the laws of Islam. The opponents of *Shuhoodees* were *Wujoodees*, who believed more in *Tariqat* and *Haqiqat* than on *Shari'at*. Sheikh Ahmed called Hindus as dogs and advocated the imposition of *Jizya* and other taxes on non-Muslims and the freedom of cow-slaughter.

Aurangzeb was a *Shuhoodee* and was strongly supported by the followers of Sheikh Ahmed. Aurangzeb had his own axe to grind and was happy to use the fanatic followers of Sheikh Ahmed for his own benefit. He had waded through the blood of his brothers and imprisoned his father to gain the crown of Hindustan. He had on his hands the murder of many Sufis, Shia Imams and several eminent scholars. He was known as treacherous, vengeful and merciless. The presents he sent to the Mufti of Mecca were at first rejected. Aurangzeb wanted to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of not only his own nobles but the kings and princes of other Muslim countries. He wanted to build an image of a God-fearing puritan, a devout Muslim and a protector and propagator of Islam. He wanted to be known as *Alamgir* and *Zindapir*. He wanted to win over the trust and esteem of Muslim masses. In the sort of prevailing atmosphere, full of political and religious rivalries, this could only be achieved by presenting himself as an orthodox Muslim. Even as a young man, he had dreamt of converting *Dar-al-Harb* into *Dar-ul-Islam*, i.e. making India an Islamic State. His fanatical zeal became evident when as Governor of Gujarat he ordered the destruction of the famous temple of Chintamani and its desecration by the slaughter of a cow. When he was Governor of Southern States, he ordered the demolition of several temples. As Emperor he formulated the policy of the destruction of temples and the places of learning of non-Muslims. According to *Ma'aasir-i-Aalamgiri*, the Emperor issued orders "to all the Governors of provinces to destroy with a willing hand the schools and temples of the infidels; and they were strictly enjoined to put an entire stop to the teaching and practising of idolatrous forms of worship." Numerous shrines in Gujarat and Orissa were pulled down. In 1665, the well-known Keshav Rai Temple of Mathura was destroyed and in 1669, the temples of Vishwanath and Malarina in Banaras were pulled down. The temple of Gopinath in Gujarat was destroyed about the same time. And so the story went on; one after another great temples all over the country were brought down and in their places mosques were

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put up. So far as the Sikhs were concerned, a gurdwara at Buriya near Sirhind was destroyed and Masands were ordered to stop collecting contributions and forbidden to send them to Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur.

At the same time, the Emperor re-introduced the discriminatory taxes on the non-Muslims, such as *Jizya*, pilgrimage tax and higher percentage of custom duties on goods sold.

But the most heinous aspect of his policy was the forcible conversion of the Hindus. All the non-Muslim State employees were told to accept Islam otherwise their services would be terminated. Hundreds became Muslims in order to save their means of livelihood. Later orders were issued to all the provincial Governors to use every means at their disposal to convert the so-called *Kafirs*.

The mounting frenzy led Aurangzeb to impose more and more restrictions not only on Hindus but almost every member of the society. It was a kind of monstrous appetite that increased with the eating. No doubt he hated the worship of idols but his perverted mind stretched the anti-image idea to the painting of portraits, the sculptor of human figures and the making of clay toys of birds and beasts. He declared them as criminal offences. He banned the lighting of lamp on the graves of *pirs* and *fakirs*. He also banned the use of music at religious ceremonies. He restricted the length of Muslim beards to four fingers and the length of the trousers worn by them was also standardized. Apart from the Hindus, the Shias, the Sufis and the Bohras suffered abundantly at his hands. Many of their religious ceremonies were banned. Many Muslims were tortured for celebrating their festivals or anniversaries. Many Shia Imams were sent to the gallows. Many Muslim scholars and saints were executed such as Sufi Mohammed Sa'eed Sarmad, Sheikh Ali of Sirhind and Mullah Shah Lahori. Sayyed Shah, a *Khoja* religious leader, was poisoned. In short, it was an age of tyranny and all those who did not toe the official line suffered at the hands of Aurangzeb.

In the same spirit, the conversion of non-Muslim was taken up on a massive scale. The provincial Governors undertook the job with excessive zeal; they used every weapon in their armoury to convert the Hindus. The converts were offered jobs, financial assistance, administrative appointments and all other kinds of rewards. As a policy, it was decided to offer the highest

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temptations to the Brahmins, particularly those attached to historical or otherwise well-known temples. It was argued that as the Brahmins were not only the most highly educated section of the Hindu society but were also the religious leaders of the people, if they could be persuaded to embrace Islam, their example would be followed by most of their followers. The Brahmins, therefore, became the first target of attack, particularly those at the famous temples of Banaras, Allahabad, Hardwar and other pilgrimage spots. But the citadels of Hinduism could withstand the pressure for a long time and because of their affluence and close-knit society, their priests could not be tempted easily. The Brahmins in Kashmir, however, were particularly vulnerable. They were far removed from the strongholds of Hinduism and had few escape routes to Rajasthan and Deccan states where they could find the protection of Hindu princes. The Kashmiri Pandits were known for their learning and scholarship and had a large following all over the country. They were few in numbers and were surrounded by a sea of Muslims on all sides. They were, therefore, the first to feel the noose closing round their necks. Iftikhar Khan, the Subedar at Srinagar, was a zealot Muslim and was delighted to carry out the instructions from Delhi. He set about his task with a fanatic fervour and did not hesitate to use the sword where all other temptations failed. Finding themselves in a precarious situation, the Kashmiri Pandits held a number of secret meetings to discuss ways and means of escape from the burning fire that surrounded them. At one such meeting, one of their leaders, Pandit Kirpa Ram, who had the good fortune to have enjoyed the close association of Guru Tegh Bahadur and had at one time been employed as the teacher of young Govind Rai, suggested that they should go to Anandpur and seek the help and guidance of the Guru. He told them that the Guru was a mystic, unattached to worldly possessions and unconcerned about his own safety and was, in his opinion, the only man who would find a way out and come to their rescue. He impressed upon them that the Guru was an idealist and, at the same time, he was fearless and these were the two qualities needed in a leader at a critical juncture in the history of a people. He felt sure that the Guru would appreciate the magnitude of the calamity that had fallen upon them and as he had always advocated the cause of the poor and oppressed, he would do his utmost to assist them. For sometime, the Pandits

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discussed the suggestion made by Kirpa Ram. Many of them were doubtful that the Guru would be able to do anything because he wielded neither political leverage nor had armed forces to challenge the authority of Aurangzeb. Pandit Kirpa Ram argued that there were powers far more potent than the militaristic or political forces. In any case, where else could they seek assistance ? Maybe the mystic had his own solution to the problem, his own way to circumvent the impasse. Seeing a faint glimmer of hope, they decided to send a deputation to Anandpur under the leadership of Pandit Kirpa Ram.

It may be mentioned that for a very long time many historians doubted the authenticity of Pandit Kirpa Ram and thought that he was not a historical personality but a figment of the imagination of some Sikh chroniclers. But all the doubts have been resolved since the evidence discovered in *Bhat Vahi Talanda Pargana Jind.* In this *Vahi*, it is recorded, "Kirpa Ram, son of Arhu Ram, grandson of Narain Das, descendent of Thakur Das, of Bharadwaj gotra, Sarsut Dat Brahmin, resident of Mattan, Pargana Srinagar, Kashmir, arrived in company with sixteen prominent Brahmins at Chak Nanaki, Pargana Kehlur in 1732 on the day of Sudi Ikadsi of the month of Jeth (25th May, 1675). Guru Tegh Bahadur, Ninth Guru, gave them consolation." Moreover, according to *Bhat Vahis* and *Bansavali Nama* of Kesar Singh Chhibbar, Kirpa Ram later accepted *Khande da Amrit* and became a full-fledged *Singh* and died as a martyr in the battle of Chamakaur (A.D. 1705). It may be added that these *Vahis* are the repositories of thousands of genealogical trees of different families and provide the most authentic account of the travel of the members of these families. These tables are maintained by the *Pandas* or pandits at pilgrim spots and they serve them as means of their livelihood. The author himself was once pleasantly surprised at Matton where a *panda* read to him the names of several of his ancestors who had visited Kashmir over a very long period of time.

After his return from his tour of Eastern India, Guru Tegh Bahadur had been cogitating over the misfortune that had befallen the country. He was deeply distressed by the reports about the demolition of famous temples and the forcible conversion of Hindus. Even though he did not believe in idol-worship, he was shocked by this senseless vandalism, the destruction of the great temples which were the priceless heritage of the country and which

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provided solace and comfort to millions of people and on the making of which so much wealth and human labour had been spent. And this whole business of conversion was distasteful and vulgar and meaningless. Faith cannot be changed by force. It is not a garment that can be taken off and discarded and, in its place, another one put on. Faith is something deeper; it is built on culture, tradition, history, scriptures, the blood of martyrs, daily prayers and attachment to all one holds sacred. Faith is belief in a revealed religion; it denotes absolute trust and confidence in God and finally it is a belief in a religion one regards as true. It is related to inner life, something far below the surface of human consciousness, something under several layers of the unconscious mind. It is not a matter of style, manner of dress, etiquette or a way of life. Islam does not mean merely the recitation of Kalma. It has its history, its own culture, its own systems of beliefs and its philosophy that shapes the thinking of its followers. And all this makes forcible conversion nonsensical. But this does not mean that conversions do not take place. When a man changes his religion for emoluments, office or other advantages or out of fear, it is no conversion. He is like a political turn-coat, worthless and undependable. Real conversion is a spiritual revolution, a replantation, a new birth; the rest is all falsehood, deception and mockery. Guru Tegh Bahadur regarded the forcible conversions as irreligious, ignoble and inhuman. It is obvious that his mind kept ruminating about these politico-religious problems because often in his sermons he indirectly hinted about sacrifice as a way out of the impasse. He continued to strengthen the faith of his followers so that they could withstand the onslaught when it came but consciously and unconsciously, he was preparing himself to face the challenge. He had a premonition that somehow or other, he himself will be personally involved in the struggle. But he had not the slightest doubt that his faith would carry him through all ordeals.

The Guru returned to Anandpur after his long tour of Malwa and Bangar Desh some time towards the end of 1674 A.D. or the beginning of 1675. It had been a very successful tour and the people in that region had been deeply influenced as was evident from the massive gatherings at every place the Guru held his congregational meetings. New centres of faith had been established and many leading landlords had become his followers with the result that

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not only the Sikh faith had gained many new and stalwart converts, wielding fair amount of influence in the countryside, but its roots went deeper and the future outlook was highly promising. The Guru was pleased with the organisational and doctrinal work being done all over the country but he was seriously disturbed by the dark clouds looming large on the political horizon.

The even tenor of his life was suddenly, almost dramatically changed with the arrival of the deputation of the Kashmiri pandits on the 25th May, 1675. It materialised out of the blue, unexpected and unannounced and sought a meeting with the Guru. They were received with all due courtesy, lodged in the guest house and in the afternoon ushered in the presence of the Guru. With folded hands and tearful eyes, the leader of the deputation, Pandit Kirpa Ram, related the stories of unprecedented atrocities that were being daily perpetrated upon them. In the name of religion, all manner of indignities were heaped on them. Their life was cramped and restricted and new taxes were levied on them. Direct and indirect pressures were being exerted on them to embrace Islam. Neither their religion nor their honour was safe. Temples were being desecrated and places of learning closed. The worst sufferers were Pandits and *pujaris*. They were unable to find any way to escape from the inhuman tyranny and the oppression of the State officials. They had come all the way to seek the guidance and protection of the Guru. The Guru was deeply touched and his compassionate heart shared their grief and sorrow. Here was a problem of great magnitude; the people's honour, religion and freedom of worship were being challenged. It was an inroad into the very life itself, it was a choice between Islam and death. How could ordinary men and women face such a dilemma, such a choice? It was inhuman, irreligious and above all un-Isalmic. It was a Gordian knot that had to be cut. The Guru sat deep in thought; silence hung in the air. Tradition has it that at that moment the young Govind Rai, a little over eight years old, entered the chamber where the Guru sat along with the Kashmiri pandits. He was struck with the unusual stillness of the room, and looking around, he noticed despondency and hopelessness writ large on the faces of the Kashmiri brahmins. With a mixture of innocence and bravado, he turned to the Guru and exclaimed, "Father, why this silence? What has happened?" The Guru raised his thoughtful eyes towards the son and after a moment of hesitation replied, "My

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son, it is a moment of great crisis for our country and its people. They are faced with a great challenge; they have to forsake their religion or accept imprisonment or even death. Aurangzeb has let loose a reign of terror and there is endless sorrow and suffering. Someone has to face the Emperor and tell him that the path he is following is wrong. It is a stupendous task. It calls for a very great holy man who is willing to sacrifice himself on the altar of freedom."

Without hesitation, Govind Rai replied, "who can be nobler than you, father?"

The Guru looked at his son and for a moment thought that he might not have understood the full implication of the proposed action. But the steady gaze of his eyes convinced the Guru that the son was willing to sacrifice the father on the altar of Dharma. The young Govind Rai was assailed neither by doubt nor hesitation. He was absolutely certain about the greatness of his father. The Guru was touched by the spirit of his son; his resolution was made, the die was cast. Without a second thought, he told the Kashmiri pandits that he fully understood the pain and agony they were suffering and the sea of troubles that surrounded them. But there was no cause to feel dejected and despondent. There was always a way out. They must trust God and stand firm and united. The Mughal raj was not a permanent feature of life; that, too, shall pass away. The tide will turn and their sufferings will come to an end. The Guru assured them that he would make their cause his own and, if need be, fight to the bitter end. Their cause was just and they would always find him on the side of justice. They had sought his protection; it shall not be denied to them. He told them that they could tell Aurangzeb and his underlings that if they could convince the Guru about the need to accept Islam, they would follow suit.

The Kashmiri pandits felt as though a great burden had fallen from their shoulders; they heaved a sigh of relief. But knowing the temper of the times, they understood that the Guru had offered himself as a sacrifice in order to protect them. They vaguely hoped that the Guru would be able to prevail upon Aurangzeb and convince him about the futility of forcible conversions. They thanked the Guru for the hope he enkindled and prayed for the success of his mission. With words of gratitude, they took leave

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of the Guru and went back to Srinagar to inform their friends and followers about the decision of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

In the meantime, the reports of the secret agents of the Government about the popularity of the Guru among the people of Malwa and Bangar Desh, the congregational meetings he had held, the sermons he had delivered, the presents he had distributed among his followers were sent to Aurangzeb at Hasan Abdaal. Aurangzeb was no longer in Delhi. He had gone to Hasan Abdaal to put down the revolt of Afridis and Khatak tribes of Khaibar. The revolt was so serious that he felt his own presence was necessary because the Pathan Chief Acmal Khan had struck coin in his own name and declared himself as king and closed the Khaibar Pass. The Emperor had earlier sent the imperial commander Mahabat Khan to suppress the revolt but it was reported that he was making secret negotiation with the Pathan Chief. Aurangzeb sent Shuja'at Khan to punish Mahabat Khan and deal firmly with the rebellious Pathan. But Shuja'at Khan was killed in the battle and the Mughal army was defeated. Aurangzeb decided to personally conduct the campaign and reached Hasan Abdaal on the 26th June, 1675. He returned to Delhi on the 27th March, 1676.

Aurangzeb was never favourably inclined towards the Sikh community. Moreover, at Hasan Abdaal he was busy trying to quell the rebellion of the Pathans and the reports of secret agents must have irritated him. At the same time, these were exaggerated reports and a political twist had been given to events. It was reported that the increase of Guru's followers and financial resource would make the Guru raise the banner of rebellion. This was apparently false and motivated; the Guru had no political ambitions. And what is most objectionable was that Guru's name and activities were associated with Hafiz Adam which were bound to infuriate the Emperor. All this amounted to saying that in the first place, the Guru was a freebooter, a plunderer and anti-social person and secondly, he had the intention of raising the banner of rebellion. To add to it, when the report of Guru Tegh Bahadur's sympathy and promise of help and making the cause of Kashmiri pandits as his own reached Aurangzeb, the Emperor's mind was poisoned. He could not tolerate anyone declaring himself as the saviour of Brahmins and challenge the right of Islam to convert non-Muslims to its faith. The fact remains that since the days of Jehangir, the Mughal Emperors had looked upon the Sikh

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theocracy with suspicion and hatred. As recorded elsewhere in the pages of this book, Guru Arjan Dev was executed, Guru Hargobind was imprisoned, Guru Har Rai was ordered to appear in the court and when he did not come, his son Ram Rai was kept as a hostage and Guru Har Krishen remained unmolested because of the good offices of Raja Jai Singh of Amber. Guru Teg Bahadur had also been arrested and kept under police surveillance for more than two months. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Aurangzeb, without making any inquiries or sifting the truth about the allegations against the Guru, wrote to the Governor of Lahore that "Tegh Bahadur be fettered and detained in prison." After a few days, he sent another order that the Guru should be executed and "having executed him, his body should be cut in pieces and hung on different sides of the city."

After the departure of the Kashmiri pandits, Guru Tegh Bahadur, besides spending a great deal of time in meditation, began winding up some of the tasks that were pending or awaited completion. It appeared as though he was preparing for the last journey. There was no hurry or undue haste in his actions; calm and collected, he kept issuing instructions to the leaders at various community centres. At the same time, he kept his thoughts to himself.

Among other things, he decided to install his successor on the *gurgaddi*. He nominated his son, the young Gobind Rai, as his successor. On the 8th July, 1675, the ceremony was performed in the presence of some of the leading Sikhs and the local gentry. It was a simple yet imposing ceremony. Gobind Rai was dressed as a prince with all the usual regalia and was conducted to the throne with due ceremony. The Guru placed five paise and a coconut before him. He bowed before his son and declared that henceforth he would be the head of the Sikh theocracy and his orders would be binding on all the followers of the faith. After the Guru, one by one, all the leading Sikhs, who had been invited from far and near for the ceremony, bowed before the tenth Guru and offered various kinds of presents. The ceremony ended with the *Ardas* wherein the Almighty God was beseeched to shower his blessings on the new Guru and guide him to lead the *panth* to greater glory. Despite the colourful ceremony and felicitations, there was an under current of sadness because most members of the audience understood the full significance of the ceremony. It was evident that Guru Tegh Bahadur had relinquished the duties

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of the church and passed on the suzerainty to his successor because he clearly envisaged the outcome of his challenge to Aurangzeb and he was fully prepared to serve the people of India with his own martyrdom. Though many participants of the ceremony were worried about the uncertain future but Guru Tegh Bahadur was sure about the soundness of his decision and had no doubt that a glorious era would begin with the end of the present chapter.

News of Guru Tegh Bahadur's impending visit to Delhi spread like wild fire and his followers from all over Punjab hurried to Anandpur. They had the feeling that probably it was the last time they would be seeing him. An atmosphere of gloom pervaded over Anandpur because the Guru's followers were aware that there was no scope for compromise with Aurangzeb. The Guru's wife and mother were deeply distressed and tried to dissuade him from going to Delhi. But he seemed altogether unconcerned. Calm and unruffled, he told them that human life was like a shadow or a bubble on the stream, which may come and go any moment; it was the indwelling spirit which was permanent and indestructible. Why should they worry about that which was perishable ? Moreover, it was God's will that would ultimately prevail; why not leave it to Him to do what He deemed best ?

He collected his leading disciples and assigned them duties which they had to perform during his absence. He also advised them to implicitly obey Guru Gobind Rai and carry out his orders. He deputed Bhai Kirpal Chand to look after the administrative duties connected with the *Sangats* all over the country.

At the last congregational prayer meeting the hymns of the Guru were sung and because of their music and simple diction, the audience was transported to a strange region of peace and contentment. And when the Guru delivered his sermon on the true purpose of life and unfolded the mystery of the Name of God, they felt drawn to the life of the spirit and understood the relationship between *Bhakti* and *Nirvan*. The audience was deeply moved and at the same time, felt inspired by the words of the Guru. The Guru blessed the *Sangat* and told them about his impending departure from Anandpur.

Three days later i.e., on the 11th July, 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur set out on a journey accompanied by only three Sikhs Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dyal Das. Historically

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the purpose of this journey is unknown nor is it clear why, unlike other tours, he took so few followers with him. It is, however, clear that he headed toward Delhi. The only inference we can draw is that he planned to meet Emperor Aurangzeb and dissuade him from following the policy of forcible conversions and at the same time plead the cause of Kashmiri Brahmins. The Guru spent the night in a village called Malikpur Ranghraan near Ropar at the house of a Sikh by the name of Bhai Dargahia. On the 12th July, the Guru and his companions were arrested by Kotwal Nur Khan Mirza who was in charge of Ropar police station. It is obvious that when the Emperor's orders about the arrest of Guru Tegh Bahadur were received by the Governor of Lahore, he passed them on to the *Faujdar* of Sirhind Dilawar Khan. Dilawar Khan sent out secret service men to keep watch on the movements of the Guru and when he received the information that the Guru was spending the night at Malikpur Ranghraan, he deputed Noor Khan Mirza to arrest him. The Guru and his three companions were sent to Sirhind where they were kept in prison for more than three months. It appears that Dilawar Khan was waiting for the instructions of the Emperor. When the second order of Aurangzeb was received, the Guru was sent to Delhi in an iron cage, accompanied by a large contingent of police force. The Guru and his companions reached Delhi on 5th November, 1675, and were imprisoned in a cell in the police station at Chandi Chowk, Delhi.

Traditionally, an altogether different story is told about the circumstances leading to the arrest of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It is claimed that the Guru along with his three companions, left for Agra to meet the Emperor and plead the cause of Kashmiri Pandits. On his way, he spent some time with his old friend Nawab Saif-ud-din at Patiala and wending his way through Jind, Majra, Rohtak etc., he reached the outskirts of Agra. Here he found a young shepherd grazing his sheep and goats. He asked the young lad to go to the city and bring for him sweets worth a couple of rupees and for his services, the Guru presented him a costly woollen shawl. When the boy asked the shopkeeper to give him sweets worth two rupees, which in those days was a lot of money, he became suspicious and informed the police. When the police found the shepherd flaunting an expensive shawl over his shoulders, they thought he was a thief and started interrogating

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him. He told them that the two things were given to him by the Guru who was camping outside-city. When the police went there they found Guru Tegh Bahadur and immediately arrested him as orders to that effect had already been received from the higher authorities. We are told that this was the novel way adopted by the Guru to announce his presence to the police. As the Emperor was not at Agra, the Guru was taken to Delhi under a strong posse of police. During his imprisonment in Delhi, the Guru was taken to the court more than once, where he held lengthy discussions with the Emperor. We are further told that the Emperor tried to persuade the Guru to accept Islam by making tempting offers of wealth, high position in his court and Jagirs which would enable him to lead a princely life. The Guru very naturally spurned all such offers and told the Emperor that his religion was more valuable than all the riches of the world. The Guru, on the other hand, tried to convince the Emperor that conversions through repression and terror were worthless and that he should win over his people through love, kindness and fair administration. There was no meeting ground between the Guru and the Emperor and at the end, the Emperor ordered that the Guru and his companions be tortured and put to death. No doubt this makes an interesting story but unfortunately it does not stand the test of critical or historical analysis. In the first place why should the Guru employ all this subterfuge to disclose his identity. He could have straightaway gone to the authorities or the police or sent a messenger and announced his arrival in Agra and expressed his desire to meet the Emperor. Secondly, why did he go to Agra? It was a well-known fact that the Emperor held his court at Delhi. Finally, the Guru could not have met the Emperor and held discussions with him as he was away at Hasan Abdaal trying to suppress the Pathan rebellion. It is a historical fact that he was away from Delhi from June, 1674 to December, 1675.

After the receipt of the second order of the Emperor which he sent from Hasan Abdaal and according to which the Guru was to be executed and his body cut into pieces and hung in different parts of the city, there began a Spanish kind of inquisition in the Kotwali prison of Chandni Chowk where the Guru and his three companions had been incarcerated. The Mughal authorities had worked out a simple but a diabolical formula for dealing with non-Muslim saints or divines when brought before a court of justice.

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They were first asked to embrace Islam and for that purpose all kinds of tempting offers such as wealth, high office and large estates were made to them. If they refused to become Muslims, they were asked to perform miracles to prove that they possessed occult or supernatural powers. If they could not or did not wish to perform miracles, they were condemned as enemies of Islam and were ordered to be tortured and finally executed. The Spanish inquisitors condemned men to torture and execution for apostasy or heresy or agnosticism but the Mughal Qazi tortured and executed men because they were religious and believers in God but would not change their religion. It was a greater crime against humanity and a more barbarous act in the name of religion.

It is traditionally believed that the Guru was made the three offers; to accept Islam, to perform miracles or to face death. The same offers were made when he had gone to meet the Emperor but at that time, he was treated as a saint or a preacher who had committed no crime. Now he was a condemned prisoner and certain formalities had to be observed to legalise the order of execution. When asked to accept Islam, the Guru replied that he could not for a moment think of forsaking his religion because it was the very breath of his life. As for the wealth and status that were offered to him, he regarded them as transitory things, no better than the shadow of a passing cloud. For him the only permanent thing was the indwelling spirit through which he held communion with his Master, the Almighty God. The Guru also refused to perform miracles because such acts interfered with the divine order of things. Finally when the Guru was told that the only alternative left was death, the Guru replied that if that were the will of God, it was his duty as His true servant to submit to His will. He had no fear of death; death was the only door which led to his union with God. Life was the gift of God and He could take it away whenever He liked.

Having failed to convert the Guru, the Qazi and the goalers set about to subdue his spirit by first inflicting tortures on his companions and then on the Guru himself.

There was an air of triumphant defiance about the three followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur. They had been his constant companions for a long time and had been imbued with his spirit of fearlessness.

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Death had lost all its terror for them. To be with the Guru and to die in his presence was for them the greatest reward of life.

Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Sati Das were brothers and were the most devoted followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Guru regarded them as his brothers and beloved companions. Bhai Mati Das was the first to be tortured. He was a man of noble bearing and firm resolution and nothing could deter his faith. He suffered grievously but never complained or uttered a groan. The presence of the Guru was a great solace to him and he accepted every torture as a test of his faith. He was finally tied between two poles and his body was cut into two pieces with a saw. He kept praying to the end of his life.

Bhai Dyal Das was the next to be tortured. He was the brother of Bhai Mani Singh. By his selfless devotion and service, he had earned such high regard of the Guru that he was always addressed as a brother (Bhaiji) by the Guru. At one stage, as stated earlier, the Guru issued instructions that the word of Dyal Das was to be respected as the order of the Guru. Bhai Dyal Das underwent various kinds of tortures with such composure and dignity that he won the respect of his own executioners. At the end, he was put in a cauldron of water and boiled to death. As the fire blazed under the cauldron, he kept steadily looking at the Guru and repeated the words "Satnam Waheguru," until he lost consciousness.

Last came the turn of Bhai Sati Das. Sati Das, it is said, was a writer and wrote down all the hymns composed by the Guru. He was a learned man and a scholar of the Persian language. He, too, was offered the choice to accept Islam or face death. He replied that only cowards changed their religion. He added that his religion was embodied in the all-absorbing love of God and his love was too deep to be destroyed by threats or rewards. His torture ended after his body was wrapped in cotton-wool and set on fire.

History does not explain why were these three disciples torured and executed. They had committed no crime; no investigation was made against them. They just happened to be with the Guru at the time of arrest. They were innocent; their execution was a crime against humanity. In cutting the one with a saw, the executioners were cutting the roots of the Mughal Empire and in killing the others, they were sabotaging and demolishing its very

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existence. All through the torture of his companions, the Guru sat calm and unperturbed. He watched the gruesome drama enacted before him, and his heart went out to his disciples. As each life ended, he raised his hand and blessed the martyr. He knew that he and his devotees had to go through the baptism of fire so that men, in times to come, may worship the God of their choice and live honourable lives.

After the martyrdom of the three disciples, the Qazi decreed that Guru Tegh Bahadur would be executed in Chandni Chowk on November 11, 1675. The news was announced throughout the city by the beat of drums. The Guru was not in the least disturbed by this announcement; he was ready to suffer death for a cause that he regarded as sacred. We do not know what tortures were inflicted on the Guru during his imprisonment in Delhi but he must have borne them with fortitude and courage. Neither the tortures on his companions nor on his own person dampened his spirits; he had come prepared both for suffering and the ultimate sacrifice.

On the night of 10th November, 1675, three men sat huddled together in a one-room tenement in the Dilwali Mohalla of Delhi. It was past midnight but they still talked in whispers. A tiny oil lamp flickered in one corner and sent large shadows of the three men looming over the walls. It was a cold night and the men sat on their haunches, wrapped in semi-woollen wornout shawls, with their arms circled round their knees. They were middle aged, sturdily built men with rugged features. Their faces were burnt dark with years of hard work out in the open, under the burning skies of summer and in cold freezing winters. But for all that, they were determined men who minced no words and acted fearlessly when action was called for. They had heard the announcement about the execution of the Guru with the beat of the drum and had met together to discuss what they, as Guru's Sikhs, could do at this unhappy juncture. The news about the tortures inflicted upon the Guru and his companions had reached them and though they felt helpless, they suffered endless agony. After a long and muted exchange of thoughts, they decided on their course of action. Jaita, the leader, told Nanna to bring a large basket filled with leaves and Uda to have a weapon hidden under his clothes and told them the exact place of their meeting in Chandni Chowk an hour before the execution of the Guru.

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Before the dawn, they quietly dispersed and went their way to complete the tasks assigned to them.

Another meeting was being held on the night of 10th November, 1675 some twenty miles outside Delhi where a large convoy of wagons had camped to spend the night. The leader of the camp was Bhai Lakhi Shah, a Sikh of the Labana tribe. After the evening meal had been served and the fires had been put out, he sent for his sons. He had spent the whole evening in a very agitated condition, pacing up and down before his large tent. He was a tall, aggressive man, used to giving orders. He was a self-made man and prided on his exploits. He had wandered all over the country supplying provisions to the Mughal armies. He had his own armed men to protect his caravan. He was rich and prosperous and commanded respect from his sons, and all his followers. But somehow he felt that all his success and prosperity was the gift of Guru Tegh Bahadur and for several years, he had come, every winter, without a break, to pay his homage to the Guru and receive his blessings. And that afternoon, a messenger had come from Delhi, bringing the excruciating news about the impending execution of the Guru and the desecration of his body after his death. The news had come as a bombshell shattering the peace of his mind. He could not eat his food; he could not rest for a moment.

His eight sons, tall, well-built and handsomely dressed crowded his tent. He greeted them and invited them to sit down on the carpet. They could see that he had something important on his mind which he wanted to share with them. With an emotionally charged voice, he told them about Aurangzeb's orders, "My sons; I cannot challenge the might of the Emperor; he has large, well-equipped armies and we are no match for them but whatever the price we may be called upon to pay, we cannot permit the desecration of the Guru's sacred body. Tomorrow, after the execution we must arrange to carry away the body even if we have to attack the contingent guarding it. Let us put our trust in God and get ready to do the task as a sacred duty. Even if one of us has to leave behind his own dead body for that of the Guru, we must not hesitate to complete the task. I see no alternative to the action I have proposed. If you have any suggestion to make, you may speak."

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The sons were struck dumb; they made no comment. The air in the camp was electrified and anger rose high in the hearts of all the men present there. They sat silent, gnashing their teeth in bitter rage.

Lakhi Shah spoke again. " Those who do not wish to join the fray, can stay behind. I do not wish to have unwilling companions for this task. It is a cause too sacred to me. It involves risks and some of us may not go unscathed tomorrow. My sons, make your choice."

Again, there was complete silence. The young men looked at each other but kept quiet.

Lakhi Shah spoke for the third time, " Raise hands who would join me in this venture."

All hands were raised. Lakhi Shah smiled and in short, firm orders, assigned different tasks to his sons. At the end, he invited his sons to join him in prayer and together they sought the protection of the Lord.

On the 11th November, 1675, the sun rose angrily, like a ball of fire but soon hid his face in dark grey clouds as if it would not be a party to the events of the day. From early in the morning, gust of cold wind blew from the East making men shudder in their woollen clothes. The clouds hung low and there were intermittent showers. It was a dull and dreary day dragging its feet all through the morning. The afternoon wore on and towards the evening crowds started collecting in the Chandni Chowk. Many people came because they had not seen an execution before. Some of them came because they wanted to be present on this occasion. Others came because they would have somthing to talk about but most people came because they had nothing else to do. A special platform had been constructed for the execution and a contingent of armed forces stood on duty.

An hour or two earlier, the Guru was taken out of the iron cage in the cell in which he had been kept since his arrival in Delhi. He was permitted to take his bath and say his prayers. Under a heavy escort, he was brought out of the Kotwali of Chandni Chowk. He walked between the guards with great dignity; he appeared calm and unruffled. There was a strange aura of spiritual glow about his face. People craned their necks to look at him and were amazed how serene and composed he was. He stopped on the platform and for a moment looked at the crowd

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and then lowered his eyes. Dressed in his flowing robes, the Qazi stepped forward and addressed the Guru. In sharp, clear voice, which could be heard over the murmur of the crowd, he offered to the Guru, for the last time, the choice between accepting Islam, performing miracles and facing death. The Guru replied in a calm but firm voice, "If I were to live a thousand lives and the same choice was given to me, I would every time prefer death to changing my religion or performing miracles." The Qazi waved his hand toward Jalal-ud-din, the executioner. The executioner, with a dark visage and heavy body, came forward and unsheathed his sword. There was a hush in the air; people held their breath. The Guru closed his eyes and, with the words of *Sat Nam* on his lips, let his spirit soar high up in the world of Eternal Sunshine. With a flash of the sword, the head was severed from the body. A great cry rose from the crowd; the throats that had felt choked, let out the voice of protest. The storm that had been brewing since the morning, rose high and filled with dust, blew fiercely and scattered the crowd in all directions. Soldiers and horsemen turned and ran to escape the fury of nature. The three Sikhs, Bhai Jaita, Bhai Nanna and Bhai Uda, who had been flitting in and out of the crowds as shadows, suddenly emerged out of this dark, dust laden storm and with the speed of lightning, collected the Guru's head in the basket and disappeared into thin air. For Bhai Uda, the need did not arise to use his large dagger. Away the three men went, leaving behind the city of Delhi.

At the same moment, like ghosts emerged from this dust ladden storm the large convoy of bullock carts, horses and camels headed by Bhai Lakhi Shah. The convoy appeared to be in a great hurry and the horsemen and bullock-cart drivers shouted and goaded the animals. As the convoy reached near the raised platform, it broke its line and moved forward in a maddening frenzy as though the beast were no longer controlled by the drivers. People ran back to save themselves from being crushed under the wheels. In the utter confusion that prevailed, Lakhi Shah with the help of his sons Nagahiya, Hema and Hudi speedily loaded the headless body of the Guru in a bullock-cart, covered it with cotton bales and hurried out of Delhi. Soon they reached their village, Rikab Ganj. It was an act of great courage because had it been discovered that they had carried away the dead body of the Guru,

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they would all have been put to death. As darkness descended on the wings of night, they stealthily carried the body inside the house and placed it on a wooden bed. They covered the body with logs of wood and when the whole village slept, they stood round the pyre and with folded hands prayed together and thanked the Lord for helping them to accomplish the task. With tears in his eyes, Lakhi Shah lighted the pyre and they all went outside the house. Soon the whole house was on fire and the flames licked the sky. They sat huddled under the open sky and contentedly watched the fire consuming the house along with all its contents. Before dawn, they collected the bones from the ashes and buried them in a brass vessel deep under the courtyard. In the morning, when the villagers came to commiserate with him on the loss of his house, Lakhi Saha said, "God, in his mercy, will grant me to build a bigger and better house than this one."

The two places, one in Chandni Chowk where the Guru was beheaded and the other in Rikab Ganj, where his body was consigned to flames, were sanctified by his martyrdom. At both these places, in due course, rose magnificent commemorative Gurdwaras, which keep alive the sacred memory of the Guru and his brave followers who risked their very lives for the love of their spiritual leader.

In the meantime Bhai Jaita and his two companions fled across the fields carrying the head of Guru Tegh Bahadur in a basket. They spent most nights under the stars except once when they slept in the house of a Sikh whom they trusted implicitly. But before the cock's crow, they were out in the fields and travelled most of the time away from the haunts of men. On the 11th November, they reached Kiratpur. Here the head was received by Guru Gobind Rai, the future Guru Gobind Singh. The head was carried in a procession to Anandpur, where it was cremated on the 18th November, 1675. At the cremation spot stands today an exquisitely beautiful Gurdwara, known as Sis-Ganj, Anandpur.

When Jaita, who, because he belonged to the low caste of a sweeper, was known as Rangretta, presented the head of Guru Tegh Bahadur to Guru Gobind Rai, the Guru embraced him and exclaimed, "Rangretta, *Guru ka beta* (son of the Guru)." For his act of bravery, Bhai Jaita will be remembered for all times to come as the son of the Guru. When the story of the execution of his father was narrated to Guru Gobind Rai and he learnt that

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though there were many Sikhs present at the time of execution but they remained hidden in the crowd collected there, the Guru made up his mind that one day he will so transform them that they would stand out as distinct individuals among thousands of people. The martyrdom of his father completely changed the life of Guru Gobind Rai. Though young in years, he shed his childhood and began to think deeply on the meaning and purpose of his father's martyrdom.

Many years later in *Bachitra Natak*, Guru Gobind Singh explained in his own way the underlying reason for the martyrdom of his father.

> After him (Har Krishen) came Tegh Bahadur,
> Who protected the frontal marks,
> And the sacred thread of the Hindus,
> And displayed great bravery in the Kal Age.
> When he put an end to his life for the sake of holy men.
> He gave his head but uttered not a groan.
> He suffered martyrdom for the sake of his religion;
> He gave his head but swerved not from his determination,
> God's people would be ashamed
> To perform the tricks of mountebanks and cheats."

In this passage Guru Gobind Singh has mentioned no less than five reasons for the martyrdom of his father. The very first to be mentioned—the frontal marks and the sacred thread—indirectly refers to the Hindu religion. It must be remembered that Guru Tegh Bahadur neither believed in the *Tilak* nor in the sacred thread. In fact he did not believe in the Hindu religion or any of its gods and goddesses who constitute its pantheon. But he recognised Hinduism as a religion and by his martyrdom, he highlighted the right of its followers to worship their own gods and goddesses. By advocating the right of the followers of another religion, Guru Tegh Bahadur lent the problem a universal colour, i.e., every man has the right to worship the religion of his own choice. Secondly, Guru Gobind Singh writes that his father died for "the sake of holy men." This obviously refers to the Kashmiri pandits and their protest against forcible conversions. In this way, Guru Tegh Bahadur condemned tyranny, oppression and the use of force in matters of religion. Thirdly, it is clearly stated

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that the Guru "suffered martyrdom for the sake of his religion." This refers to the choice given to Guru Tegh Bahadur during his imprisonment and at the time of execution to accept Islam or face death. Fourthly, the Guru suffered martyrdom for the sake of *Dharma* because he had come to Delhi determined to sacrifice himself rather than bow to the demands of the Emperor. Lastly, the Guru would not perform miracles because he regarded them as tricks which mountebanks and cheats perform for making a living. Guru Gobind Singh also mentions the "great bravery" his father displayed and his inflexible will which enabled him to give "his head but uttered not a groan." This passage from *Bachitra Natak* portrays the courage and nobility of Guru Tegh Bahadur his invincible will, the protection he offered to the oppressed and the ultimate sacrifice he made for the sake of universal freedom of worship.

It should not be forgotten that Guru Tegh Bahadur had not committed any crime for which he could have been punished. He had raised no banner of rebellion against the Mughal government for which he could have been condemned. He did not wage a war to protect his own religion. The Sikh religion, at that particular juncture, was not in any serious danger. The Guru had no axe of his own to grind. In his conflict with the Emperor none of his personal issues were involved. The history of the world is replete with martyrs but they died either for the defence of their religion or their country or something they held more precious and dear than life itself. Socrates and Galileo died because they held knowledge dearer than life. But Guru Tegh Bahadur died for the defence of the oppressed, for the protection of a religion which was not his own and for the human right of man to worship as he pleased. He was a prince among the martyrs of the world; his martyrdom was sublime because it was not concerned with his own person, religion or country but it was related to the spiritual life of every individual on earth.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur deeply influenced the the history of India. It highlighted tyranny, injustice and fanaticism and made the people of India hate Aurangzeb and his government as never before. It turned the Sikhs into a militant people and made them feel that they could protect their hearth, homes and religion only by the force of arms. It also led to the creation of the *Khalsa* and the establishment of a distinct Sikh

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community. It was a unique martyrdom because Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his precious life for the cause of *dharma* and the basic principles deemed sacred by all mankind. The two prominent features of his personality, the detached Yogi and the fearless warrior attained their highest consummation in his martydom.

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8

The Poet

Poetry is the outpouring of a passionate heart and is intimately connected with the personal experience of the poet. The emotional upsurge may be caused by any of the innumerable aspects of life such as the various facets of human love, the grandeur and sublimity of natural beauty, the exquisite delicacy of a work of art, the revolutionary devotion to the cause of freedom or the inner quest of a man for the Transcendental Reality. Apart from the various experiences Guru Tegh Bahadur underwent as a child and a young man, his life was mainly concerned with two things; his personal spiritual advancement through long years of meditation at Bakala and the propagation of his faith among his people all over the country. The first helped him to formulate the ultimate goal of human life : the attainment of *Nirvan* (salvation). The second gave him an insight into the working of the human mind and the impediments which obstruct the spiritual growth of man. As a result, he made it his mission to persuade men to lead spiritual lives and help them to recognise and overcome the obstacles that came in their way. He felt that men must divest themselves of their egoism and their love of worldly possessions as a pre-condition for any measure of spiritual attainment. It is, therefore, not surprising that his poetry is primarily concerned with *Vairaga* (non-attachment) and *Tyaga* (renunciation).

The basic principle of Guru Tegh Bahadur's philosophy is the importance of human life; the rare opportunity it provides for the attainment of salvation. He believed that it was the apex of God's creation; a whole cycle of transmigration (Samsar) had to be gone through before the gift of human life was granted. It would be

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tragic for man to throw away such a golden opportunity. In Raga *Gauri*, addressing the seekers of truth, the Guru says :

> O seekers of truth, sing the praise of the Lord,
> Why waste away the human life so invaluable ?

Again in the same Raga but in a different *padavali* (hymn), the Guru expresses his distress at man's reckless waste of precious human life in his search of worldly possessions :

> Having attained the business of human incarnation,
> He makes a waste of his life;
> And attaches himself to the illusive world of Maya.

In the same vein, the Guru expresses his amazement that, behaving like a maniac, man throws away the precious jewel of his life :

> Man gambles away the precious jewel of life;
> Without comprehending the ways of the Lord.

In another hymn, the Guru states in unambiguous terms that this rare opportunity of human existence will not be granted again and, therefore, it would be best to utilise it for the attainment of salvation :

> Not again mayst thou get the human incarnation
> Engage in the effort now to attain salvation.

The same idea is repeated in Raga *Sorath* in words of crystalline clarity :

> After wandering in various births for aeons,
> At last thou hast attained human life,
> Saith Nanak : This is your opportunity to seek uinon with the Lord,
>
> Why not engage yourself in devotion.

It is obvious that the Guru regarded human life as a precious jewel, a priceless gift and a rare opportunity, and exhorted his followers to make the best use of it for union with the Lord. But

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we have to admit that, despite the importance of life, many of its features are highly distressing. Life is insecure, uncertain, unstable, hazardous, brief and ends in death. No one can be sure how long it will last and what shape it will take. Moreover, life is full of sorrow, suffering unhappiness and regrets; at every stage of life whether childhood, youth or old age, it is prone to disease, injury and accidents. And, old age itself brings infirmity of every kind : the body becomes feeble and movements slow down and gradually the vitality is sapped and "palsy shakes a few thin hair" and as the old bard put it, one exists "sans eyes, sans teeth, sans everything." No doubt there is the sunny side of life; the youth and its romance, the excitement of adventure, the intoxication of success, the thrill of sports, the gaiety and merriment of congenial society, the exhilaration of sex, the warmth of wine and the forgetfulness of narcotics. But, alas, all these pleasures are momentary and evanescent and every rapture has its hangover and leaves us much emptier, harder and more dead. And death spares none. Though man proudly struts on the human stage and regards himself the supreme master of all he surveys and dreams to dominate the whole world and explore the planets, yet he is essentially a bubble, once pricked, he is gone and there is nothing left behind. The ashes are scattered by the wind and the bones washed away by the river. But the most surprising aspect of man is that he turns a blind eye to the brevity of life and certainty of death. Despite the death of his relations and friends, the obituaries in the press, the oft-repeated receipt of black bordered letters and the shocking telegrams, he pursues his activities relentlessly unconcerned with all that goes around him. Whatever can be the cause of this blind indifference ?

Guru Tegh Bahadur, who studied life patiently and with great care, supplies us the answer. It is the mercurial and fickle mind of man that envelops him in a fog and leads him astray. In Raga *Gauri*, he describes the characteristics of the human mind :

O seers, it is hard to restrain the restless mind,
Mercurial and immersed in desire
It stays not for a moment in one place.
In the mind abide violence and cruelty,
The stormy passions clouds its judgement,
It overpowers the jewel of knowledge
And harbours not any virtue,

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In vain the Yogis perform penance,
In vain the ascetics sing the praises of the Lord,
The mind remains uncontrolled.
Saith Nanak : When the Lord bestows His grace,
Man overcomes all obstacles and achieves Union with God.

It is a powerful hymn unfolding the might and viciousness of mind. Directly and forcefully, the Guru describes the restlessness and the eternal hunger of the mind and the inability of even the sages to control it without the grace of God. What is more, it is full of unnatural desires which cannot be appeased. Natural desires like hunger and thirst can be appeased by food and water but cravings (trishna) is never fully satisfied. It is like fire, the more you feed it, the more it grows. That is why there is no end to the cravings of the mind and that is the main reason for its restlessness and dissatisfaction.

In another hymn, the Guru describes how the mind, because of its avarice and covetousness, runs about like a mad man.

O my mind, why wanderest thou like a mad man,
Forgetful that each day your life is curtailed,
And avarice has turned thee worthless.

Again in Raga *Deva Gandhari*, the Guru draws our attention to the human craze for collecting wealth and what is more, in its pursuit, man commits every crime. It is the human mind which, instead of leading a virtuous life, is drawn to evil ways. The Guru compares it to the tail of dog which refuses to remain straight.

The mind is intractable in the extreme—
All exhortations lost in its passion after folly.
Maddened by Maya's intoxication
To devotion it is indifferent.
Robbing others by fraud and deceit, man satisfies his greed;
Incorrigible as a cur's tail.

The most powerful denunciation of mind is made by the Guru in a hymn in Raga *Sorath*. The hymn is indeed rich both in diction and imagery. It is almost like a cry of anguish.

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Mother mine, this mind is nowhere in my power :
Running day and night after evil courses, how may I restrain it ?

Impervious to holy teaching
Seeks others' wealth,
Coveting their womenfolk,
Making waste of all his life!
Maddened by heady liquor of worldly pelf,
Blind to words of Divine wisdom
Ignorant of the Immaculate Lord's mystery,
Whose dwelling is in his heart.

Here is poetry at its best; rich, noble and exhilarating. The hymn describes how man, blinded by his greed, runs day and night after women and wealth and remains ignorant of the Lord who lives within his heart. He becomes immune to the teaching of the sages and wastes his precious life by committing one sin after another. The Guru's compassionate heart is pained at the sinful ways of man and he expresses his astonishment that man is unaware of the presence of God within him. At the end, the hymn advocates that man must turn to God, seek his shelter, contemplate on his *Name* and terminate the cycle of deaths.

All my false thinking vanished
On seeking shelter with the holy Preceptor.
As I contemplate the Lord, Fulfiller of all desires,
Yama's noose fell snapped.

There are many other hymns in which the Guru draws our attention to the sinful ways of man and the tragic waste of life. We will give one more quotation from Raga *Jaitsari* where the Guru describes how the entanglement in Maya leads to the bondage of Yama :

This deluded mind is entangled into Maya;
All actions avarice-inspired put man only in Yama's bondage
Man ignorant of truth is involved with delight in poison,
Neglecting devotion of the Lord.

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The underlying idea of this hymn is that, because of avarice, man is entangled in the meshes of Maya; all his actions lead to still greater attachment with the world. The more he is involved in the pursuit of wealth, the more he is bound down and the less are his chances of escape. The ignorant mind does not realise that it is getting addicted to poison and that, in turn, makes it forget the Lord. The Guru makes it clear that the attachment to the world is poison and the attachment to God is *Amrit* (nectar) and it is the waywardness of the mind that would not let man see the difference.

Apart from the attachment of the mind the five deadly sins, *Kam* (sex), *Krodh* (anger), *lobh* (avarice), *Moha* (attachment) and *hankar* (pride)—and probably the sixth sin of egotism, which could be classified under pride because whatever the kind of pride, it leads to a fall—the mind has another great failing that it refuses to distinguish between the permanent and the temporary, the true and the false nature of things around him. We have already mentioned about man's approach to death; despite all the deaths around him, he refuses to recognise its implication with relation to his own life. He fails to see that neither he nor the world around him is permanent. No doubt the world *per se* is permanent but the world of each man, the world to which he is attached, the period of history in which he plays his part, however insignificant, is short-lived and subject to destruction. His own days are numbered and so are the days of the world and worldly possession to which he is so deeply attached.

Guru Tegh Bahadur has described the impermanence of the world in words of great lyrical beauty and has compared it to a dream, a mountain of smoke, shadow of a cloud, a wall of sand, a bubble on a stream and finally as sheer falsehood. In Raga *Sorath*, fervently, almost passionately, the Guru advises man to cherish and accept this truth in his heart that the whole world is like a dream and it does not take it more than a moment to vanish. To stress the same idea, he adds that the universe is a like a wall of sand and would not keep standing even for a few days. Equally transitory are the pleasures derived from wealth. The only permanent thing is the inner truth that leads to the vision of the Eternal Master.

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O Man, grasp firmly the truth
The whole universe is like a dream, shattering in an instant.
The wall of sand you laboured to build will crumble in a few days,
So are the pleasures of the world,
In which thou fool, are entangled.

In a similar hymn in Raga *Basant*, the Guru expresses his surprise that man has forgotten that after death, he has to deal with Yama, the angel of death and this world which is like a mountain of smoke and which man foolishly regards permanent, will dissolve instantaneously. Nothing will last, neither wealth nor wife nor home. What strange reasoning makes man think that these things are permanent ?

O my mind, why has thou neglected the Lord's devotion ?
After dissolution, the spirit falls under Yama's power.
Know this world to be no more than a mountain of smoke;
What reasoning has made thee believe it lasting ?

In another hymn in the same Raga, the world is compared to a dream :

Know this world to be insubstantial as dream.
Know this for truth; it will vanish in an instant.

Another hymn ends with the same thought :

Saith Nanak : The whole world is false,
Even as a dream at night.

In another hymn, the Guru says with considerable emphasis that not only the world but all that exists in the universe is subject to destruction. The human body, wealth, status and all other things to which man is attached, are like the shadow of a passing cloud. The Guru regards all these pleasures and attachments as poisonous.

Why entangle thy heart in this poison,
None can last for ever in this world:

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Some enter this world, others depart,
Whose is this body, wealth, status for ever ?
To what dost thou attach thyself ?
All that is visible will vanish as the shadow of a cloud.

Besides the hymns (padavalies), the impermanence of life is described in three *Shlokas* in simple but telling words :

Know the world to be transient like a dream,
Saith Nanak; Nothing in it is true and lasting
Beside the Lord Himself.

And again :

As the bubble on water
Ever forming and vanishing—
Saith Nanak: Listen my friend,
Such indeed is all creation and this world.

And again :

Know my friend,
This visible world is unreal and false
Saith Nanak: It crumbles away,
Like a wall built of sand.

The Guru has some very telling comments to make about the love and affection of the wife, relations and friends. There is much hypocracy and selfishness in this show of love and attachment. With considerable sarcasm which is rather unusual in the writings of Guru Tegh Bahadur, he describes how the wife, who is a constant companion of her husband and for whom the husband professes deep love, forsakes the husband the moment he dies and shuns him as if it were a ghost. The underlying thought is that the body of husband which was once a source of pleasure and an object of adoration becomes a fearful and frightening ghost the moment the soul leaves it.

In Raga *Sorath*, the Guru says:

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The wife of thy home,
Beloved of thee and ever by thy side,
The moment the swan of life forsakes this frame,
Shuns thee as a frightful ghost.

And what about father, mother, friends and relations ? In Raga *Dev Gandhari*, the Guru describes the scene vividly at the time of mans departure from this world :

All human ties are limited to living persons.
Mother, father, brother, progeny and the partner of the home,
The moment life forsakes the body, all look upon him as ghost,
Even for an hour they would not keep him,
Hastily they turn him out of the house.
Ponder this deeply: This world is like a mirage.
Saith Nanak: Devote thyself ever to the Divine Name
And thus gain liberation.

And what about friends ? In Raga *Sorath*, with underlying cynicism, the Guru describes the absence of real friends in this world. Man foolishly believes that it is his charismatic personality, his warmth and courtesy that attracts his friends to gather round him. The real fact is that they all come to him when he is rich and prosperous but when adversity overtakes him, they abandon him. Essentially, they are selfish and are concerned only with their own pleasure and happiness.

True friend, there is none in this world,
The whole world is engrossed in seeking pleasure.
None would stand by thee in adversity.
Wife, friends, sons and relations.
Gather round thee while thou art wealthy;
Once they find thee bereft of thy riches,
They all forsake thee instantly.

In another hymn, the Guru draws our attention to the same thing in concise and clear-cut words :

In time of prosperity, many attend thee and surround thee;
In adversity all forsake thee.

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But the foolish mind, without realising the true nature of the transitory world and the hypocracy and insincerity of relations and friends, goes on chasing shadows and building castles in the air until suddenly it becomes aware of the noose tightening round the neck. The play ends, the lights go out and the curtain comes down. This anti-climax is presented beautifully by the Guru in the 38th *Shloka*.

> Man had great expectations from life,
> What came to pass was altogether different,
> Forgetful, the mind remained in the entanglement of Maya,
> Saith Nanak: Suddenly man finds Yama's noose round his neck.

If the mind is restless and is drawn towards sinful ways and the world is full of snares and friends and relations are fickle and undependable, what is the way out ? How to control the mind? How to escape the ensnarement of Maya ? How to rise above human weaknesses ? The answer to all these questions, according to Guru Tegh Bahadur, is *Nam-Simran*. What is *Nam* ? *Nam* denotes God as well as His attributes. *Nam* is synonymous with *Shabad* (Word). It is the means of revelation as also the means of meditation. It is also the the means of crossing the ocean of *Samsar*. *Nam* is also *Amrit* (nectar of immortality). *Nam* is also *Anand* (bliss). Whatever God has created is the expression of His *Nam*. God is part of His creation. Therefore whatever and wherever you see, you will find God. So *Nam* is within us and outside us. And God is Truth (*Sat Nam*). The first thing a man has to do is to accept the existence of God and then endeavour to feel His presence within himself. What is *Simran*. Guru Tegh Bahadur supplies the answer. Feel the presence of the Lord within yourself; with loving devotion approach Him; with your ears listen to his greatness; with your tongue sing His praises, with your mind meditate on His *Nam* and always keep the company of holy men. In Raga *Sorath*, in a hymn, rich with musical texture, the Guru says;

> O my mind, attach thyself in love to the Lord:
> Let your ears ever listen to the praise of God,
> And with your tongue sing His glory.

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In the company of holy men meditate on His Nam,
And be thus exalted from thy fallen state.

In another hymn in Raga *Telang*, the Guru exhorts man to meditate on God because the span of life is short and soon death will overtake him.

Listen O man, now is thy opportunity to meditate on God
Meditate on Him day and night.
Each moment thy life flows off as water out of a broken pitcher,
Ignorant fool! Why neglect devotion to the Lord.

At the end of this hymn, the Guru tells us that by *Nam-Simran*, we attain the stage of fearlessness (Nirbhai pad). Freedom from fear (abhaya) is one of the attributes of God as described in *Mul Mantra* and the attainment of such a state brings man closer to God. It is one step towards perfection. In another hymn, the Guru describes how through *Nam-Simran* man attains salvation in this very life. Such a person is called "Jiwan-mukta." In Raga *Bilawal*, a hymn ends with these words :

He who, removing his egotism and attachments
chants the Lord's praises,
Saith Nanak: such a one truly is a jiwan-mukta.

Here is another hymn in Raga *Ramkali* in which the idea of attaining liberation while still alive is repeated :

O, my mind, take shelter in Lord's Name,
Whose remembrance dispels evil thinking
And grants liberation.

In another hymn in the Raga, the Guru uses the expression, *pad nirbana*, which means the attainment of salvation through the contemplation of *Nam*. It may be explained that this was a new concept in religious thought introduced by Guru Nanak. It meant that by shedding egotism, overcoming attachments and becoming fearless, man reached an exalted spiritual stage where he could be regarded as one who had attained salvation without having passed

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through the door of death. The highest discipline for this purpose is the Yogic discipline of *Nam* and this secret is revealed to man through the graciousness of holy saints.

> The mind, entangled in Maya, understands not the Divine Truth—
> The Truth of that Divine Name the contemplation of which brings liberation.
> The holy saints of God, through their graciousness,
> Revealed this truth to me.

Egoism has been denounced by the Guru in many of his hymns and nowhere is it so clearly stated as in one of his *Shlokas*. He says that when man overcomes egoism and sincerely accepts God as the Divine Force that impels all actions, he becomes truly liberated,

> One who has discarded egoism,
> And accepts God as the cause of all things
> Saith Nanak: Consider this as the abiding truth,
> That such a one is truly liberated.

The blessings of *Nam-Simran* are portrayed at some length in words of extreme delicacy and chiselled beauty, in one of the hymns addressed to his mother and composed in Raga *Basant*. The Guru admits that he has acquired the true wealth of God's Name. And what has been the result of this achievement ? His mind has ceased fruitless wandering and has attained inner peace; the love of worldly possession has vanished and the light of pure wisdom has dawned on him; avarice and attachment have been replaced by devotion; the doubts and delusions gathered in previous lives have disappeared and he has gained the jewel of True Name. All yearnings have vanished and he has a feeling of fulfilment. The Guru ends this hymn with the thought that it is through the grace of God that this great gift of devotion is granted to man and it is the rare souls who are the recipients of this spiritual wealth.

> Mother mine, the true wealth of God's Name have I found;
> Thus has my mind stopped from straying and found poise.
> Maya and possessions have left my self;
> Pure enlightenment has arisen.

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Devotion to the Lord have I grasped;
Avarice and attachment defile me not;
Doubts of innumerable births have ended;
As the jewel Name came to my hand;
All yearnings vanished from me.
Through absorption in joy of fulfilment.
Devotion comes to him alone
On whom descends the grace of the Lord,
Saith Nanak : This wealth a rare devotee alone may find.

Apart from the hymns (Padavalis), the stresses on *Nam-Simran* (devotion to the Lord) is expressed forcefully by Guru Tegh Bahadur in some of his *Shlokas*.

In Shloka twenty-six the Guru clearly states that without the devotion to God, man repeatedly becomes the victim of death.

Saith Nanak : With devotion to God,
Man is caught in the noose of Yama.

In Shloka twenty-seven, the Guru throws light on man's eternal search for happiness. The Guru uses the word *Sukh*, which like *Dukh* has wide connotations. *Sukh* means health, happiness, prosperity and peace of mind all put together as *Dukh* means sorrow, suffering, illness, depression and disappointment, all or any one of them. One thing must be kept in mind that riches do not bring *Sukh*; some of the richest men have been the most miserable ones. For the seeker of *Sukh*, the Guru has one simple advice : seek the Lord's protection through *Nam-Simran*.

If you seek lasting happiness
Seek shelter in the Name of the Lord.

In Shloka twenty-eight, the Guru says that without *Nam-Simran* life is wasted :

The foolish and ignorant men
Run after worldly possessions;
Saith Nanak : Wasted is life passed without devotion to God.

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Finally in Shloka twenty-nine, the Guru describes in unambiguous terms that with constant devotion the difference or distinction between the Lord and the devotee is annihilated.

> One who night and day engages in loving devotion,
> Know him to be the very image of God.
> Believe this from Nanak : Between God and His devotee,
> there is no distinction.

The same idea of the merging of the Atman into *Parmatman* is presented in a hymn in Raga *Sorath* in a much richer and more picturesque manner. When through the grace of God, one discovers the secret of life—the secret that gold and dust are alike, that life's pleasures are insignificant and becomes indifferent to praise or blame—he merges into God as water merges into water and loses its identity. The hymn ends with the following unforgettable four lines :

> By the Grace of God alone does man,
> Learn the secret of life,
> Saith Nanak : such a one is merged into the Lord,
> As water into water.

And what kind of God is He about whom Guru Tegh Bahadur sang with such rapture and ecstasy ? It can best be understood when we take note of the different ways he describes Him or the expression he uses for Him. He calls God Bhagwan, Naryana, Raghunath Chintaman, the Lord, Brahama, the protector, the beloved, the friend, the father and the Divine companion. He describes htm as *Sargun* (God with attributes) and *Nirgun* (God without attributes), as Almighty, as creator of all things, as infinite as Omnipresent, as merciful and just. He is within us and also prevades in all His creation. He protects us and comes to our aid whenever we call on Him. He forgives our sins and delivers us from pain and anguish. In Raga *Bihagra*, the Guru devotes a whole hymn describing the various attributes of God.

> No one knows the inscrutable ways of the Lord ;
> Yogis, celebates and anchorites
> And vast number of the wise,

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Have sought to fathom His mystery in vain
In an instant He turns beggars into kings and kings into beggars !
Those that are filled He empties and fills those that art empty.

Such are His inscrutable ways.
His Maya He has spread Himself :
He Himself watches its working.
Infinite forms are assumed by Him
Yet He remains apart from his creation,
Infinite, incompassable, inaccessible, immaculate—
Such is the Lord whose manifestations have bewildered the whole universe.
Nanak, His creature, has discarded all illusions
And fix his mind on devotion to His feet.

It is impossible to portray every aspect of the Almighty God and yet the above hymn gives a fair idea of the mystery and infinity of the Supreme Being. At the same time, the Guru does not present God as inaccessible and beyond the reach of man. In fact he derides the idea of man seeking God in forests and on mountain tops. God is within man; He exists everywhere and as such, within the heart of man as well. In Raga *Dhanesari*, the Guru compares the existence of God in man with the presence of fragrance in a rose and reflection in a mirror. As the fragrance is an inseparable part of the flower and reflection is ever present when one looks into a mirror, so does God reside within us and is a permanent part of our being. This is a delicate and tender hymn in which symbols and images are combined to evoke a sense of immortality. The diction is simple but the thought content is indeed profound.

Why does thou go to the forest to seek God,
He is all pervading and eternally immaculate,
He fills all thy being
As does fragrance the rose
And reflection the mirror.
The Lord ever abides within us,
Seek him, brother, within thy soul.

The same idea is repeated in a hymn in *Raga Jaitsari* ;

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Unaware of the Master ever within him,
He Seeks him in forests.
The Divine jewel is within his heart,
He is ignorant of this knowledge.

The idea of God dwelling within man is presented in many other hymns. So much stress has been laid on this aspect of spiritual life because it is the very basis of mysticism. It establishes the relationship of soul with God and directs the *sadak* (aspirant) to turn inward and seek the Lord there. It cuts at the root of *Sanyas*, asceticism and the cult of wandering mendicants.

Guru Tegh Bahadur also presents God as a merciful saviour who always comes to our assistance when we are in trouble. God not only helps His devotees but also sinners and depraved people provided they repent and pray for his forgiveness. The Guru uses five mythological stories in his hymns to portray the compassionate and merciful nature of God. All the stories are used more than once and their main purpose is to convince us that anyone, man or beast, saint or sinner, who seeks the Lord's protection and with a devout heart prays to him, is not only helped to overcome his immediate difficulty but is also liberated from the cycle of births and deaths. In a hymn in Raga Sorath, beginning, " O, my mind, seek the Lord's protection, "the Guru describes how the Lord, through his graciousness saved Dhruva, the child-saint, Ajamal, the sinful Brahmin, Ganika, the courtesan, Gaj, the elephant and Pandava Princess, Draupadi. A brief glance at the problems of these five characters will go to show how the Lord's devotion came to their aid in dire circumstances.

Dhruva, at the age of five, was deeply hurt by the cruel treatment of his step-mother and the indifference of his father, Utanpada. When he went to his own mother for consolation, she told him that it was through spiritual efforts that man attained high position and recognition. Dhruva left his home and headed for a forest with a view to performing austerities and *tapasya* for the attainment of spiritual powers. On the way he met the Sage Narada, who informed him of the difficulties and hardship he was likely to face in his search for spiritual attainment. But Dhruva remained firm in his resolve and attained *Nirvan* through his steadfast devotion to God. Gura Tegh Bahadur wrote about Dhruva in the following words :

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He whose contemplation made Dhruva eternal and free from fear,
Why has thou forgotten the Lord, O man ?

And again :

Listening to Narada's preaching the child Dhruva
Engaged in devotion.
Attained the state eternal, immortal, fearless
That struck the world with wonder.

It is a pity that the translation of these passages cannot convey the delicacy of words used by Guru Tegh Bahadur and the nuances of meanings remain hidden. In Guru's words, Dhruva remained in a constant state of ecstasy or absorbed in devotional hymns and thus attained the state of fearlessness and became eternal and immortal. Such is the God the Guru presents through the story of Dhruva—the God whose devotion leads to salvation.

Ajamal was a famous brahmin of Kanauj. He married a prostitute and led a sinful life. It so happened that he named one of his sons as Narayana, which is another name of God. At the time of death, frightened by the arrival of the angel of death, he shouted for his son, "Narayana," "Narayana" and for some unknown reason, this led to his concentration on the name of God and the result was that his soul was liberated. The Guru writes in his hymns :

Ajamal the sinner, known all the world over,
In a moment his release came.

And again :

In his last moments Ajamal got awareness of the Lord,
And in an instant attained merit
That Supreme Yogis seek.

And again :

God's name is the source of perennial joy
Whose remembrance liberated Ajamal and Ganika.

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And who was Ganika ? Ganika was a prostitute. Someone gave her a parrot. This parrot repeated the Name of God frequently and through this repetition awakened spiritual consciousness in Ganika. The story tells how this consciousness led to her liberation. Guru Tegh Bahadur uses this puranic story to emphasise the value of devotion. In Raga *Sorath*, he writes :

My mind, seek the Lord's protection :
Fill thy heart with devotion to Him
Whose contemplation brought liberation to such as the Courtesan.

Again in Raga *Bilawal*, the Guru writes :

Know the Lord's Name to be Annuller of suffering,
Whose remembrance brought liberation to the sinners Ajamal and Ganika.

Let us now turn to the story of *Gaj*, the elephant. According to the mythological account a certain person had been turned into an elephant because of the curse of a saint. This elephant who was known as Gaj, was once dragged by an alligator deeper and deeper into water until only his trunk remained outside. He was near drowning when he prayed to the Lord to save him. The story goes that his cry for help was heard by God and he was saved. Guru Tegh Bahadur uses this story to impress upon his readers that if God listens to the request of an elephant, would He not listen to the prayer of a man ? In Raga *Gauri*, the Guru says :

Seek ye shelter in the Redeemer of the Fallen,
Cherisher of the Humble.
Why be indifferent to Him who annulled the Elephant's agony ?

Again in Raga *Sorath*, he says :

The Lord Annuller of Suffering—why art though indifferent to Him ?
The Elephant got free of the alligator's grip
As he came under the protection of the Treasure-house of Grace.

And again in Raga *Bilawal* :

Realize this in your soul.
As on the Lord the Elephant meditated
In an instant was his terror lifted.

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Finally, we turn to the well-known story of Draupadi. In the great epic of Mahabharata, we come across the famous scene when Pandavas, having lost everything to Kauravas in gambling, are brought to the court and Duryodhana, in order to humiliate the Pandavas, orders the disrobing of the Princess, Draupadi. When the servants seize her and start unfolding her *saree*, Draupadi cries out in agony to the Lord to save her honour. The Lord comes to her aid and the folds of her *saree* become endless. In Raga *Maru*, the Guru describes the scene in the following words :

> Draupadi in Duryodhana's court
> contemplated the Name Divine
> The compassionate Lord removed her suffering
> And bestowed His grace and protection.

All these stories highlight the Guru's firm faith that whoever seeks the Lord's protection in distress, He comes to his succour. It matters not in the least whether the cry for help comes from a saint or a sinner or even an animal, the compassionate One always extends his protecting hand. His graciousness is infinite and it is bestowed on one and all who come to Him with hearts filled with humility and devotion.

It would be observed that Guru Tegh Bahadur was a mystic, a philosopher and a preceptor. As a mystic he was certain about the ultimate aim of human life—the attainment of salvation; as a philosopher, he worked out a system of ethical living and *Nam-Simran* that led to the attainment of *Nirvan* and as a preceptor, he sought to persuade man to overcome his weaknesses, recognise the presence of God within him and to make a sincere effort to become part of the Ultimate Reality. In hymns of exquisite lyrical beauty and rich thought-content, the Guru presented life as a rare opportunity which came after a whole cycle of *Samsar* for the achievement of salvation. He was distressed by the tragic waste of this rare opportunity. He described man as forgetful of death, attached to the sinful ways of life; his restless mind entangled in Maya "maddened by the heavy liquor of worldly pelf." Man does not understand that life is fleeting, evanescent and temporary and the world is like "a dream shattering in an instant." It is nothing more than a wall of sand or the shadow of a passing cloud. The Guru described attachment to the world as poison and attachment to

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God as *Amrit* (nectar). And God, the Guru insisted, was within man; there he should seek Him, The Guru presented God as kind, compassionate and merciful; ever ready to help anyone who comes to Him with a devout heart. Out of all these ideas emerges the Guru's concept of an ideal man. The Guru has described the ideal man in a most powerful and moving hymn in Raga *Sorath* beginning with the words "One who by suffering is unperturbed" and ending with the conclusion "Such a one is merged into the Lord as water into water." The ideal man is also described as a *Jiwan Mukta*, one who has attained *Nirbhai pad* or *Pad-Nirvana*, or a *Gurmukh*. *Gurmukh* is one who hears and obeys the Guru's word. *Gurmukh* is opposite of *manmukh*, one who follows his own wayward impulses and pays no attention to the advice of the Guru. The Guru regarded Gurmukh or the ideal man as his brother and friend. Besides, the hymns, the ideal man is described in simple yet moving words in the *Shlokas*. Here is a *Shloka* in which the ideal man is presented as the image of God :

> One who is untouched by joy and sorrow;
> By avarice, attachment and egoism;
> Saith Nanak : such a one is indeed an image of God.

In fact there are eight *Shlokas* describing the characteristic of the ideal man. He is a man who is above joys and sorrows, treats friends-and foes alike; he fears none nor seeks to frighten anyone; he is indifferent to the wealth of the world; he rises above egotism and regards all men as images of the Creator. Such a one, says the Guru, is truly liberated. This is the ideal that Guru Tegh Bahadur, as a preceptor, placed before mankind.

We have studied at some length the philosophical concepts of Guru Tegh Bahadur as presented in his writings. It is time to assess him as a poet. Unlike some of the earlier Gurus, Guru Tegh Bahadur was not a voluminous writer. He wrote only 59 hymns (Padavalies) and 57 *Shlokas* (couplets). Out of the thirty Ragas employed by various Gurus, he only used fifteen Ragas for his compositions. He used mostly *Braj Bhasha* for his hymns and couplets. *Braj* has a feminine delicacy which lends a peculiar charm of its own. The Guru's use of rhyme and rhythmic schemes are severely restricted; they are somewhat formal and rigid. Both for the hymns and the *Shlokas*, the metrical pattern remains almost the same; he

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had little desire to use the different forms of poetry. His thought-content is also restricted. Essentially only four thoughts run through his poetry : the utter waste of the limited span of human life, the essential loneliness of man, the concept of the ideal man and the absolute necessity of devotion to God for the purpose of salvation. His approach to poetry is classic rather than romantic. Classicism, it may be explained, is marked by the beauty of form, good taste, restraint and clarity of thought and expression. It respects tradition and learning and leans heavily on literacy, historical and mythological associations. Moreover, it deals with those aspects of life which have an established and traditional background. The writing is generally chaste, dignified and didactic. All these qualities are apparent in the writings of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He did not belong to the romantic school of poets. Romanticism, it may be mentioned, is a revolt against classicism, a revolt against its rigidity and formalism. It means liberty, abandon, emotionalism, and free expression of one's own thoughts and emotions. It is chiefly concerned with the romantic aspects of life such as nature, beauty and human love. In form and style, it is individualistic. It expresses itself without restraint and hesitation and is full of fanciful flights. Guru Tegh Bahadur was a mystic and had little to do with human emotions and passions. He had a mission and a message and with classical restraint and dignity, he sought to present it to his readers. In fact the Guru condemned all human attachments and advised his followers to reject the glamour, glitter, power and pelf of the world. The Guru had rejected the sensuous experiences of life because they were not lasting; they were momentary however deep and significant they might have been.

It may, however, be admitted that the Guru wrote more about the darker aspects of life rather than the brighter ones. He seemed to be looking at life through the door of death, as though he was looking through the wrong end of the telescope. But the fact is that he had crossed the dark forest of life and reached the lonely top of the mountain. Those of us who live in the forest are enamoured of its light and shade, its endless variety of life, its fruit and foliage, its drama and excitement, its endless struggle and even its uncertain, unending and frightening dark channels. But the Guru viewed the human struggle as a tragic waste of valuable opportunity of life. He looked at life through death because man had to conquer death and its fear and, in the final analysis, death was the

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only door to immortality. The Guru supported the dictum of his predecessors that death, of which the world was afraid, was bliss (anand) to him. It was through death alone that one reached the spiritual landscape (Sach Khand) where it was ever daylight and there were no dark shadows; it was a landscape common to all mystics and seers whatever their faith and from whatever direction they approached it. This was the goal which was the main subject of his writings.

The Guru had absolute unshaken faith in God and this faith he wanted to instil in his followers. His poetry is the poetry of *Vairaga* and its one object is to convince man about the value of devotion to God. From history and mythology, he selected incidents to strengthen the faith of his readers. He laid great stress on the control of the fickle and restless mind; he advocated the destruction of human ego; he pleaded for the purity of life; the elimination of lust, avarice, anger, pride and other human vices and weaknesses and finally he wanted man to understand the relationship of *Atman* with *Parmatman* and through *Nam-Simran* merge in the Infinite as water merges into water.

The chief characteristics of the Guru's poetry is its agelessness. There is no contemporaneity about it. It belongs to all time and its appeal will be everlasting.

The Guru addresse his hymns to saints (sadhus), to his friends, to his mind, to man in general and to his mother. But they are essentially didactic hymns and are in no way related to any particular person or individual. They mostly deal with man's entanglement with Maya's illusion and his means of escape through devotion of God. There is an austere and touching beauty about these hymns.

It is, however, the *Shlokas* of the Guru which are exceedingly popular among his devotees. It appears as though the essence of life has been extracted and presented in these *Shlokas*. Each *Shloka* is a gem shining with its inner light. Yet collectively, they have a powerful impact on their readers. The subject matter of the *Shlokas* is the same as that of hymns; the utter waste of life without the worship of God, the ideal man, the importance of *Nam-Simran* and the impermanence of the world. But when recited in a rich and sonorous voice, their impact on the listeners is magical. They stir an emotional chord and awaken human sensibilities. Words and phrases tumble in a rhythmic pattern

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resulting in a stream of music. The effect is that of a sea wave, rising slowly and then going over the heads, submerging everyone. The listener is lost in a world unknown to him. The music is soft and delicate, the words are simple, their meanings are clear and unambiguous and the effect is that of spiritual wine or narcotic. The words glow in the mind with the radiance of immortality and people rise as if transfigured. The experience is something very near the sublime and words are inadequate to describe it. It is only a poet of the calibre of Guru Tegh Bahadur who could write such *Shlokas*.

Such was my Master, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Great in life, he was surpassingly great in death. In his life, he went all over the country enkindling hope and faith among the people and setting up new centres of Sikhism. He was a loving father, devoted husband, a noble leader and a gracious Guru. And when the Kashmiri Pandits came, most willingly and unhesitatingly, he offered his protection simply because they were ladden with sorrow and anguish. It mattered not to what religion or faith they belonged to; it was enough that they had a tale of woe to tell and they needed sympathy and consolation. The Guru was fully conscious of the fact that it would amount to a challenge to the Mughal Empire and it will involve the supreme sacrifice of his own life. But he did not hesitate because the issues were Truth, Justice and Dharma and not a handful of pandits. He paid the price of martyrdom because he knew its value. He knew that through martyrdom alone, tyranny and oppression could be destroyed. Through martyrdom he came to join the small band of the immortals of history, the problem of *Nirvana* he had solved years before his death. Now that the Emperor, the Qazi and the executioner have been consigned to the dust heap of history and will be ultimately swept by the tide of time, the Guru lives and will continue to live in the hearts of millions and his noble writings will inspire and bring solace to tortured minds and anguished souls and show the path of Truth to his devotees till the end of human history. He was a unique martyr; he laid down his life for truth, humanity, human rights and the sanctity of worship.

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Index

Adi Granth 2, 23, 24, 34, 35
Ahmed Sheikh 185, 186
Ahomas 174, 175
Ajmal Khan 222, 223
Akal Takht 4, 16, 20, 57, 61. 73
Akbar, Emperor 9, 17, 37, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 56, 62, 67, 184, 185
Alam Khan Rohilla 151
Amar Das, Guru 4, 8, 9, 22, 37, 40, 43, 45, 56, 61, 115, 170
Amrit 2, 213, 217, 227
Anandpur 139, 179-80, 187
Angad Dev, Guru 31, 38, 39, 40, 61 115, 136
Anil Rai 2, 78, 79
Arjan Dev, Guru 4, 11, 13, 14, 17, 22, 24, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 54, 56, 71, 112, 115, 165, 194
Arjuna 5
Asaf Khan 62
Atal Rai 2, 15, 63, 79
Ashoka 45
Aurangzeb, Emperor 27, 116, 118, 119, 120, 121, 124, 144, 149, 152, 174, 177, 181, 184, 186, 187, 192, 193, 195

Babar 27, 31, 33, 37, 50
Babar Vani 31
Baisakhi 16, 180
Bairam Khan 44
Bakala 81, 108, 113, 125, 127, 129, 133, 152, 175
Bala Sahib 125
Balaki Das 142, 175
Dr. Balbir Singh 86
Banaras 113
Bangla Sahib 124
Bawli 42, 69
Beg, Mirza Ghiyas 59
Beg, Mirza Zafar 42
Bhagwan Das 43, 46, 67
Bhagvad Gita, 5
Bhakti Marg 5, 6, 195
Bhakti Movement 5, 47, 167
Bibi Bhani 8, 9, 43, 115
Bhidi Chand 27, 65, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76
Bowli 42, 69
Buddha 84, 167, 168
Bhai Buddha 22, 24, 48, 54, 78, 79, 139
Buddhism 7, 112, 165, 167, 168

Bhai Sukh Chain 142
Chaitanya 5
Chak Nanaki 139, 140, 141, 177, 178
Raja Chakradhwaj 176
Chandu Shah 50, 53, 67
Chengiz Khan 31
Chittour 37, 42, 43
Christ 84

Dacca 142
Dadu 5
Damdama 135, 183
Damodri 2, 78
Dara Shikoh 56, 116
Bhai Darbari Das 142
Bhai Dargah Mal 126, 127, 134, 196

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Dasu 40
Datu 40
Dawar Baksh 62
Dhamdhan 137, 151
Dhana 5
Dhar, Shri 145, 158, 163
Dharna 93
Dhayana 93
Dhirmal 61, 78, 80, 126, 131-2, 133, 137, 141
Dilwara Khan 196
Din-a-llahi 47
Dip Chand, Raja 139
Diwali 16, 133
Dukhnivaran 174
Daulat Khan Lodhi 29
Durga 38, 84
Dwarka Das, Bhai 127, 134, 136
Dyal Das Bhai, 15, 145, 151, 170, 171, 173, 195, 199

Eckhart 94

Faranghana 31
Farhad 101
Faizi 46
Abu Fazal 46, 47
Mohsin Fani 16, 58, 75
St. Francis 94

Gaj 223, 225
Galileo 206
Ganika 223, 225
Gariba, Bhai 127
Gaya 112
Guru Gobind Singh 7, 13, 27, 39, 54, 67, 69, 139, 142, 162, 173, 177, 191, 192, 194, 204, 205, 206
Goindwal 42, 43, 45, 52, 61, 78, 136
Guru Granth Sahib 7, 22
Gujri, Mata 61, 68, 143, 162
Gullam Hussain 183, 184
Gurdas, Bhai 17-18, 22, 23, 24, 48, 54, 78, 79, 136, 159
Gurditta 2, 61, 66, 67, 80, 116, 139
Guru 13, 99, 177
Guru Ka Chak 10
Guru Ke Mahal 19, 20
Gurukul System 22
Gwalior 14, 58, 61, 60

Hafiz Adam 183, 184, 193
Hardevi 81
Hardwar 29, 41, 109, 146-7
Guru Hargobind 2, 3, 4, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 49, 50, 54, 55, 57, 59, 60, 64, 67, 69, 74, 81, 108, 115
Hari Chand 81
Harimandir 4, 7, 17, 19, 20, 21, 49, 56, 61, 79
Harji 137, 141
Harikishan, Guru 113, 116, 123, 129 133, 171, 194
Hari Rai, Guru 80, 81, 108, 113, 116, 117, 118, 119, 122, 142, 171
Haqiqat 46, 102
Hemu 45
Hinduism 7, 166, 167
Hiuen Tsang 112
Hoer 49
Hukam 13, 152, 171, 182
Hukumnama 146-7, 163, 170
Hulas Chand, Bhai 142
Humayum 32, 37, 44, 45, 145-47

Iftkhar Khan 188

Jahangir Emperor, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 61, 69, 185, 193
Jainism 7
Raja Mirza Jai Singh 113, 158, 174, 194
Jaita, Bhai 65, 170, 200, 203, 204
Jaithia Seth, Bhai 113
Jalal-ud-Din 203
Janamsakhis 27, 34, 36, 39
Jehad 149
Jetha 8
Jewahri Mal, Bhai 163
Jiwan, Malik 120
Jiwan Mukta 165, 218, 227
Jiwya 46, 121, 185

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Jnaneshwara 5
Jnan Marg 6
Juliet 101
Mir Jumla 175

Kabir 5
Kabul 32, 33
Kafir 121, 185, 187
Kale Khan 77, 75
Mehta Kalu 27
Kandhar 32, 51
Karam Marg 5
Karma 6, 100
Karma Devi 147
Karori Mal, Bhai 72
Kartarpur 29, 39, 61, 74, 78, 117
Kaulsar tank 64
Kauravas 5
Khadur 38, 61, 136
Khusrau 52, 62
Khand Sach 97, 102-106, 155
Khawaja Khizer 55
Khunj Serai 16
Kiratpur 77, 78, 123, 138, 141
Kirpal Chand 142, 143, 177, 195
Kirpa Rani 188, 189, 191
Krishna 5, 6, 7, 84
Kuliz Khan 69
Kurukshetra 5, 29, 109

Lahira 74
Lakhi Shah Bhai, 201-202, 203, 204
Lakhmi Chand 115
Lal Chand 61, 68
Lalo 34, 36
Langar 71
Lehna 38, 39
Lodhi, Ibrahim 32
Lohgarh 70
Makhan Singh Lubana 128—134

Mahabharata 5
Mahadev 48, 49
Mahadevi 2
Man Singh 46
Mani Singh, Bhai 199
Mardana 25, 29, 160
Marifat 46, 102
Masand 4, 10, 16, 20, 41, 123, 126, 133, 134, 151, 180
Mati Das, Bhai 15, 151, 195, 199
Maya 6
Mecca 29
Meherban 11, 49, 116, 117, 134
Mehra, Bhai 82, 84, 127
Mian Mir 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 79
Mohammad 156
Mohan 9
Moksh 6
Mohri 9
Mubarak, Sheikh 46
Mukhlis Khan 69, 70
Mul Mantra 6, 90, 99
Murad 118
Murtza Khan 52, 57

Nadir 6, 100
Nam 13, 30, 98, 171, 217
Nam-Simran 7, 71, 79, 96, 97, 98, 145, 153, 155, 164, 217, 218, 219, 220, 229
Nanak Guru, 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 17, 23, 24, 27, 28, 31, 36, 39, 64, 86, 91, 94, 95, 102, 115, 160, 164, 170
Nanaki Mata, 2, 14, 81, 127, 143
Nanna Bhai, 200, 203
Narang Gokul Chand, 42
Bachiter Natak 162, 205
Nimbhakara 5
Nirguna 13, 29, 221
Nirvan 5, 6, 66, 150, 161, 167, 195, 208, 226, 230
Nur Jehan 50, 51, 56, 58, 59, 61, 62
Nur Khan Mirza 196

Onkar 171
Osman Khan 75, 77

Painda Khan 16, 65, 70, 74, 75, 76
Pandavas 5
Panipat 32, 45
Patanjali 85, 91, 95

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Patna 113, 142, 169, 170
Pincot 184
Plato 79
Prayag 110, 161
Prithichand 11, 48, 49, 53, 115, 134
Punnu 101
Pushpa Devi, Rani 177

Qadiriya Silsilah 55
Quran Holy, 32

Rai Singh 46
Ram Das, Guru8, 9, 10, 11, 22, 47, 61, 113, 115
Ram Rai 116, 122, 123, 124, 133, 194
Rama 5, 6, 7, 84
Ramanand 5
Ramdaspur 10
Raja Ram Pratap 16
Raja Ram Singh of Amber 151, 174, 176, 177
Rana Sanga 32
Rattan Chand 67
Rani of Bilaspur 138
Ravidas 5
Romeo 101

Sabad 13, 171, 217
Safihad 143, 182
Saif Ali Khan 143-44, 145, 158, 163, 177, 182, 196
Sahasaram 112, 165
Samarkand 31
Samsar 6, 30, 217
Sangeet 39, 110, 111, 181
Sarguna 13, 29, 221
Sati Das, Bhai 15, 151, 195, 199
Sayyidpur 34, 35, 37
Sehaj 171
Shah Jehan, Emperor 51, 59, 62, 75, 118, 121, 143, 185
Sen 5
Shankara 94
Shahryar 62
Shariat 46, 102, 120
Sher Shah Suri 37, 44
Shihan 131
Sri Chand, Baba 37, 65, 66, 78
Shikoh, Dara 117
Shiva 5, 6, 7, 84
Shujah 118, 119
Simran 6, 217
Sirhind 43, 187
Samadhi 93, 106
Socrates 79
Sufis 25, 46, 55, 56, 103, 184, 187
Sufism 46
Sukh Dyal, Bhai 171
Sukhmani 165
Suraj Mal 61, 66, 80
Mount Sumair 29

Takhat Sahib 135
Tara Chand, Raja 139
Taran Taran 51, 61, 136
Tariquat 46
Tiloka, Bhai 70
Timur 31, 32, 33
Todar Mal 46
Tolstoy 86
Transmigration 6
Trump 184
Tse, Lao 94
Tukaram 5
Tuzuk-i-Babari 32
Tyag Mal 3
Tyagi 3, 208

Uda, Bhai 200, 203
Umar Sheikh Mirza 31
Upanishads 88, 89, 118, 166

Vairgya 96, 172, 178, 184, 208
Vallabh 5
Vir Singh, Bhai 94
Viro 2, 69
Vishnu 5, 6, 7, 40, 84

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Wasan, Bhai 70
Wazir Khan 58, 59, 60, 67, 68, 69, 75
Wujoodees 186

Yar Khan 16
Yoga 85, 91-92, 96
Yogis 17, 18, 39, 84
Yonnus Khan 31

Zoroastrianism 47

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